

STARS AND STRIPES®

Manning passes on shot at record, but Colts win

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Quarterback Peyton Manning



DODDS changes spring break for 1st ID schools

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Green Day's latest CD gets political

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Volume 63, No. 248 © SS 2004

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2004

50¢

Bush backs Rumsfeld in face of criticism

President also says Iraqi security forces not ready to take over Page 10



The Christmas gift is in the mail

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PHOTOS BY SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Watson, left, and other military postal workers work 12, 13 or even more hours a day at this time of year. Watson, stationed at Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy, is shown sifting through holiday greeting cards that likely won't make it to their final destinations by Christmas morning.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Celebrex advertising: The maker of best-selling arthritis pain reliever Celebrex said it plans to immediately stop advertising the drug.

The move comes after a study showed high doses of Celebrex were associated with an increased heart attack risk.

New York-based Pfizer Inc. spent more than \$70 million advertising Celebrex to U.S. consumers in the first nine months of this year. Pfizer said it plans to continue marketing the drug to doctors.

Immigrant smuggling: Jurors resumed deliberations Monday in the trial of two men accused of taking part in a deadly immigrant smuggling attempt in which more than 70 people were crammed inside a stalling tractor-trailer near Victoria, Texas. Nineteen of the illegal immigrants died.

The trial of Victor Jesus Rodriguez and Fredy Giovanni Garcia-Tobar is the first stemming from the deaths in 2003. Five of the 14 people indicted have pleaded guilty.

Kerik flaws: White House investigators knew of many of the flaws that surfaced since Bernard Kerik withdrew as the nominee to lead the Homeland Security Department, Andrew Card, President Bush's chief of staff, said Sunday.

Kerik, 49, withdrew his name from consideration on Dec. 10, saying he had employed an illegal alien as a nanny and had failed to submit required Social Security payments. Card did not say whether a decision was made that Kerik's shortcomings should be overlooked to approve his nomination. "It was Bernie Kerik's decision not to go forward," Card said.

Business

Microsoft-EU relations: Microsoft Corp. renewed its offer Monday to resume negotiations with the European Union in their five-year antitrust battle, saying it would do so immediately after a court rules this week on whether to suspend an order forcing the software giant to change business practices.

The two sides were involved in settlement talks before EU antitrust regulators fined Microsoft a record \$666 million and told the company to reveal some of its trade secrets to competitors and produce a Windows platform without its digital Media Player. A decision had been expected as early as last Friday.

Fannie Mae problems: The board of Fannie Mae has been discussing a possible executive shake-up as the embattled mortgage giant responds to regulators' allegations of accounting violations and faces a likely re-statement of \$9 billion or more in earnings.

A \$9 billion restatement, which Fannie Mae previously had said would be likely if the Securities and Exchange Commission found its accounting was flawed, would wipe out about one-third of reported profit since 2001.



Afghan disarmament: Afghan authorities load pieces of an anti-aircraft gun onto the back of a truck Monday after it was handed over by former Afghan fighters as part of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program in Kabul, Afghanistan. Under the DDR scheme, ex-combatants, after handing their weapons over, are given the choice of working in agriculture, training for the police, de-mining, starting a small business or being reintegrated back to Afghanistan's national army now being trained by foreign troops.

World

Chirac on Turkey/EU: French President Jacques Chirac reiterated on Monday that Turkey would have to make considerable effort to join the European Union and that French citizens will be allowed to make their voices heard in a referendum.

Chirac discussed the significance of the Friday decision by the EU to start membership negotiations with mostly Muslim Turkey in October.

Bus hijacking: Two Albanian housepainters were jailed Monday to await trial on charges of hijacking a bus in Athens and holding about two dozen passengers hostage for 18 hours, authorities said.

Gaz Resuli and Leonard Murati, both 24, charged with kidnapping and attempted murder, apologized for their actions at their arraignment. They said they took the hostages and demanded a \$1.3 million ransom to start a business in Albania.

Ukraine election: Ukraine's two presidential candidates faced off Monday in a televised debate less than a week before a rerun of their disputed election, with opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko accusing his rival of trying to steal the Nov. 21 runoff vote.

Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich responded by saying his opponent was dragging up past accusations and refusing to look forward to Ukraine's future, and he suggested that a Yushchenko victory would further divide the nation.

Rules for the 100-minute debate allowed the two candidates to ask each other questions directly.

French hostages: France is receiving information about the two French journalists held hostage in Iraq on a regular basis and, despite four months' captivity, they are in good health, Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said Monday.

France grimly marked the fourth month of captivity for Christian Chesnot, a 37-year-old journalist for Radio France Internationale, and Georges Malbrunot, 41, of the daily Le Figaro, with campaigns of support.

The men disappeared Aug. 20, along with their Syrian driver on the road to the Najaf. The driver was freed last month.

Terrorism in Indonesia: A rusty, unexploded grenade was found near the Hilton Hotel in Jakarta early Monday, police and hotel officials said, days after foreign governments warned that terrorists were planning attacks on Western targets ahead of Christmas.

A gardener found the grenade near a fence surrounding the sprawling, five-star complex in the Indonesian capital, said Emerald Park, Pangeran, Hilton's public relations director.

Gaza resistance: Israel's attorney general declined Monday not to press charges against a leader of West Bank settlers who called for resistance against government efforts to evacuate settlements, a Justice Ministry official said.

Settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein called on his followers to resist evacuation under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to remove all 21 settlements from Gaza and four from the West Bank next year.

Photo and stories from wire services

Correction

A story in Saturday's paper about the 37th Airlift Squadron's return from Iraq contained an error. All of the squadron's C-130 Hercules aircraft have not yet returned to Ramstein Air Base, Germany.



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Stars and Stripes

Last-minute holiday mail keeping post offices busy

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — Well, better late than never.

That's how Petty Officer 1st Class William Sharon felt about the packages of Christmas gifts he mailed off Monday to parents and in-laws, a mere six days before the big day.

But he didn't mind that the gifts won't arrive in time to be opened Christmas morning.

"Usually, we don't send 'em anything, so I

guess it's better late than never," he said, chuckling while standing in line Monday at the cramped, one-room post office at Naval Support Activity, Naples.

Miles away in Iraq, Marine Maj. Stephen Newsome avoided the whole last-minute rush for several reasons, some not so merry.

Christmas gift exchanging was "officially waved off" this year for Newsome, in Iraq all of four days. "Too busy at the Newsome house anyway. My sister is getting induced this morning to have a son and my dad is having bypass surgery next Monday. Not exactly the Christmas we all envisioned."

"I will, however, buy and mail some cards today," Newsome said in an e-mail from the Green Zone in Baghdad, where he is deployed to the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team.

"From what I see around here, ... [mail flow] seems to be coming just fine. We are absolutely surrounded in card packages, and most everyone seems to just lump it all in a pile for community use," Newsome wrote.

The mailroom at Forward Operating Base Danger in Tikrit, Iraq, expanded operating hours about three weeks ago to "accommodate the large number of packages expected to be both incoming and outgoing during the holiday

season," said Capt. Bill Copperroni, spokesman for the Task Force Danger/1st Infantry Division.

"Many of our soldiers are taking advantage of this time to send Christmas packages back to friends and loved ones [and] ... soldiers are taking advantage of the additional mailroom hours."

Postal clerks expect to work 12 hours a day or more this time of year, even if it's the week before Christmas and the recommended shipping dates have come and gone.

"It's nonstop. Just nonstop," said Postal Clerk Petty Officer 3rd Class Eric Watson, 27, stationed at Naples.

"It's been amazingly busy for the last three to four weeks," said Air Force 2nd Lt. Jesus Raimundi, 24, officer-in-charge of postal operations for the 835th Communications Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

"It's been amazingly busy for the last three to four weeks."

Air Force 2nd Lt.

Jesus Raimundi
officer-in-charge of postal operations for the 835th Communications Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Handlers at Frankfurt, the central processing center for all U.S. mail coming in and out of Europe, process about 110 tons a day this time of year, up from the 50 tons to 55 tons otherwise processed, Raimundi said.

To handle the surge in mail and related services such as stamp sales and money orders, the 835th augments its usual staff of 77 military members and 21 civilian workers with 35 "seasonal overhires" from Nov. 15 to Jan. 15.

The additional workers help cover the influx in customers, mail volume and lets the post offices run operations 24 hours a day, with the night-shift processing incoming mail. Nevertheless, the unit is already 10 airmen short, based on a 2001 training study based on half the current mail volume, he said.

"Since October, these kids have been working 12-hour shifts five days a week, and they haven't batted an eye. They are the most motivated folks I've ever seen," Raimundi said.

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SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Petty Officer 1st Class William Sharon, 33, who works at the "clao hall" at Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy, waited until six days before Christmas to send off bulky boxes of presents to his parents and in-laws. That's better than years past, he said, when the Sharnos didn't often mail any gifts.

DoDDS reschedules spring break for 1st ID schools

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

WÜRZBURG, Germany — School officials have handed 1st Infantry Division troops returning from Iraq a Christmas gift that some parents don't want: They've moved up their children's spring break one month so the weeklong holiday falls during the time most of the returning troops will be on leave.

Late last week, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe announced that schools in Ansbach, Bamberg, Grafenwöhr, Kitzingen, Schweinfurt, Vilsack and Würzburg will hold spring recess from March 14-18. All other schools will close the holiday as scheduled, from April 11-15.

"This was in the best interests of military families," said Mary Ellen Riley, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for DoDDS's Bavaria District.

About 11,000 1st ID troops from northern Bavaria left in February for a difficult year-long deployment in north central Iraq, and most are expected to return to Germany between late January and early March.

Upon returning, each soldier will work seven half-days of "reintegration training," then receive 30 days of block leave. If the troops return home as scheduled, the original school holiday would fall outside the troops' vacation time.

Officials reworked schedule to coincide with returning troops' block leave.

"When my husband comes back, if the kids are still in school we don't want to take them out," said Vanny Cao, the mother of two Würzburg American Elementary School children.

"It's a good decision," said Staff Sgt. Tiffany Lewis of the Kitzingen-based 4th Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery, a mother of two elementary-school age daughters who is home on leave from Iraq. "Once we return, they'll be out of school. That's more time I'll get to spend with my family."

But the decision prompted a fierce debate within DoDDS before it was announced last week. For teachers and many families, the school calendar is a set-in-stone fixture around which they schedule their lives. Some have set vacations or purchased nonrefundable airline tickets.

"The school calendar is the gold standard, what we go by. This sets a terrible precedent for all future deployments," said Wendy Starnes of Würzburg, a parent-teacher association member. "The community should have been polled."

Last Wednesday, Ronald McIntire, the Bavaria district superintendent, sent a memo to faculty and administrators saying that the spring-break change — under consideration since September — had been rejected.

"I thought for sure it wasn't going to go," said Pinky Hall, a Schweinfurt teacher whose husband is deployed to Iraq.

But after a strong reaction from Army leaders at 1st ID and U.S. Army Europe, DoDDS-Europe Superintendent Joseph Tafra reversed the decision the following day. The leaders persuaded him that the extreme hardship of the Iraq tour on 1st ID families outweighed the inconvenience to the school district.

Mike Thompson, assistant superintendent in the Bavaria District, said the rescheduled break may force schools to reschedule some sports events, and part of a three-week period of standardized testing also must be changed. The district may add a holiday as well, to break up the long stretch between spring break and Memorial Day. School officials also have been told to give plenty of latitude to teachers and families who have made plans for April.

"We had a little hesitation about it at first," said Harvey Gerry, DoDDS-Europe's chief of staff. "Given the really extreme nature of what went on, we said 'OK, let's go ahead and make the change.'"

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School cuts cost of MBA program

BY BEN MURRAY
Stars and Stripes

Troy University's Heidelberg, Germany, campus is offering a new scholarship program to entice American students to enroll in its master's degree program in general management.

The university is lowering the cost of its master's of business administration courses from \$25,884 to \$19,500. Its executive MBA program has gone from \$27,875 to \$21,000, said Petra Metzger, the school's office manager. The special deal, called the Patriot Scholarship, applies only to American servicemembers, their family members and Department of Defense civilians, contractors and retirees, Metzger said.

The reduced tuition includes the cost of books for the 16-month course, which is a combination lecture/distance learning curriculum, including two weekends of instruction in English per month by a Troy University professor flown in from the U.S. campus, Metzger said.

Anyone interested can get more information at the new school's Web site, <http://www.troyuniversity.de>.

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JESSICA INIGO/Stars and Stripes

Army Chaplain (Maj.) Sid Young, who is with the Nevada National Guard and deployed to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, greets troops coming back from a rest and recuperation trip to the States. Before he stopped counting in November, Young had greeted more than 250,000 troops and civilians at the base. Young is looking into getting a permanent position within the U.S. Army Europe so he can do what he loves.

'Happy Chappy' helps soothe worries

Chaplain with R&R crew tends to warriors bogged down with stress

BY JESSICA INIGO
Stars and Stripes

RHEIN-MAIN AIR BASE, Germany — Sometimes all a combat-jaded troop needs is a warm smile and a hearty handshake to feel human again.

Army Chaplain (Maj.) Sid Young, with his welcoming grin and perceptive gaze, makes it his job to tend to war fighters who are bogged down with emotional stress.

Young acts as the heart and soul of transient troops going through Rhein-Main Air Base, catching the emotion in their eyes and lending an ear when it counts.

He hears every affliction, from pain left after the death of a battle buddy to difficulties of family separation, but sometimes it's what he doesn't say that makes the biggest impression on traveling troops.

"He's just what troops need to get back in the swing of things — get that mind-set. I think he provides confidence in people and motivates them just by being there. He's the best chaplain I've seen. He amazed me," said Sgt. Paul Stokes, a military policeman with Company G, 759th MP Battalion, who was traveling back Wednesday morning from rest and recuperation leave to Camp Borden, Iraq.

Stokes and the rest of the MP battalion heading back to the desert first met Young when they came into Rhein-Main to begin their leave.

Young, who has picked up nicknames such as "Smiley" and "Happy Chappy," briefed the troops with his team of all-Army R&R specialists, providing counseling, medical, mental health and spiritual services.

The chaplain, who was activated with the Nevada National Guard over two years ago, has spoken to just about every troop or civilian who flew through Rhein-Main for R&R, initial deployment and homecoming flights since he deployed to the air base in May 2003.

When he last counted, which was in November, he had greeted 250,000 troops, which he thinks is "absolutely amazing."

"I'm in a very unique position," said Young, who is a Protestant chaplain with the Mormon

"He's just what troops need to get back in the swing of things — get that mind-set. I think he provides confidence in people and motivates them just by being there."

Sgt. Paul Stokes
Company G, 759th MP Battalion
military policeman

church. "It's the most marvelous position to be in. I'm able to share that light, actually touch soldiers — and by my opinion, that's God's light. They feel it and feel the difference. They can put on their gear face and know they can go back and finish their job, what they started."

Young worked as a psychiatric counselor in his own private practice at home in Utah and as a teacher at the Southern Utah University church education system before being activated. He said he could tell the difference between a troop's gear face and actual pain. That is when he steps in and takes steps toward making the troops healthy in heart and mind.

Young spearheads the 64th Replacement Company's R&R team, based at Rhein-Main. Master Sgt. Darrell Jackson, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the R&R program, and Staff Sgts. Randolph Lieberman and Matthew Legg, two U.S. Army in Europe Reserve mental health and medical specialists, send the troops off emotionally prepared.

The team works almost anytime of the day or night, meeting, greeting, helping and handling troops. The hours vary with flights, but usually the R&R crew counts on working between midnight to 6 a.m. and then again from 9:30 a.m. until sometime in the early afternoon when its mission ends.

Once troops are in the terminal, the R&R crew tries to get as much one-on-one interaction as it can. Sometimes the chaplain is stopped and asked to do a quick prayer, other times the R&R group spots someone in need of guidance, but team members always make themselves available any time of the day or night.

"I love the mission," Young said. "We don't get a lot of sleep and there are a lot of lonely nights in the terminal, but it's all worth it. Sometimes I'll have four or five soldiers waiting in line down the hallway to talk to me, while other times I just talk to troops in passing for five or 10 minutes. Each flight is different and we always have to be prepared."

Many times before the flights take off back to the desert, Young climbs aboard and sends the troops off with a final prayer and blessing.

Now, Young is looking forward to being there for troops as they come in over the holidays, though he will be missing his own family Christmas in Utah for the second year in a row.

In fact, this year the whole family — his wife, Kris, their six children, four grandchildren and the three more on the way — will be at his home in Cedar City, Utah.

Still, he knows he's doing the right thing. "I would just have to reiterate how important it is to make sure each and every soldier is taken care of and that I'm there for them for whatever they might need," he said.

Young, who has been asked to extend again as the R&R chaplain, is looking into getting a permanent position within the U.S. Army Europe so he can do what he loves while having his family in Germany with him.

The troops burdened with war worries said they wouldn't have it any other way.

"I think it's wonderful having the chaplain here," said Capt. April Lynn Gasparri, who was enroute to Shindand, Afghanistan, with the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment. "Some people don't seek the church, but sometimes they need guidance. They have it available to them right when they step off the plane and from someone who's so sincere, honest and believes in God. It's great."

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Gulf War cancer risk

WASHINGTON — Veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War exposed to pollution from oil well fires, exhausts and other sources face an increased risk of lung cancer, a government advisory group reported Monday.

A committee of the Institute of Medicine concluded there isn't enough evidence to determine whether most of veterans' health problems are associated with such exposures.

But it said occupational and environmental exposure to combustion products has been shown to increase danger of lung cancer.

"Studies of people exposed to air pollution, vehicle exhaust and burning of coal and other heating and cooking fuels consistently show that such exposures are linked to increased risk for developing lung cancer," committee chair Lynn Goldman said in a statement.

"This provides sufficient evidence that exposure to combustion products during the Gulf War could be associated with lung cancer for some veterans," said Goldman, a professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

However, Goldman added, "It should be emphasized that smoking is the major culprit for lung cancer, accounting for 80 percent of all cases, according to the American Cancer Society."

The committee said evidence is too weak to connect other cancers to exposure to combustion products. But it said there are indications that such exposure may be linked to asthma, cancers of the nose, mouth and throat, bladder and to low birth weight and premature births among women exposed while pregnant.

Defense budget

WASHINGTON — The White House is pressing Pentagon officials to cut tens of billions of dollars from their proposed budgets over the next several years, signaling that the Bush administration's massive defense buildup during the years following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks is coming to an end.

The White House move to rein in Pentagon spending — described by defense officials and outside experts monitoring the negotiations — comes as the nation faces rising budget deficits and growing costs for the Iraq war, currently about \$4.4 billion a month.

The Pentagon budget cuts will not affect spending on the war in Iraq and operations in Afghanistan, but experts monitoring the negotiations — comes as the nation faces rising budget deficits and growing costs for the Iraq war, currently about \$4.4 billion a month.

The Pentagon budget cuts will not affect spending on the war in Iraq and operations in Afghanistan, but experts monitoring the negotiations — comes as the nation faces rising budget deficits and growing costs for the Iraq war, currently about \$4.4 billion a month.

If the Pentagon's emergency supplemental budget for 2005 is approved, Congress could end authorizing nearly \$500 billion for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year.

But only before President Bush submits his 2006 budget to Congress, the military services are scrambling to find areas that can be cut.

The Air Force and Navy could be especially hard hit, with each branch possibly losing \$4 billion to \$5 billion, analysts say.

The Navy also controls the budget of the Marine Corps.

From wire services

50 suspects detained in Najaf car bombing

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Thousands of mourners attended funerals Monday and Iraqi authorities detained 50 suspects in connection with an explosion in the Shiite holy city of Najaf that killed 67 people and wounded 142.

Iraq's interim prime minister warned that the rebels were trying to foment a sectarian war in the country.

Najaf police chief Ghalib al-Jazaari said that 50 people were arrested Monday in connection with the bombings. They included "elements" who had confessed to having links with the intelligence services of neighboring Syria and Iran, he claimed.

Authorities in Najaf banned cars from entering the downtown area that houses the Imam Ali shrine to prevent future bombings, Gov. Adnan al-Zurufi said Monday.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said the mainly Sunni Muslim insurgency, blamed for the deadly strikes Sunday against Iraq's majority Shiites, want to "create ethnic and religious tensions, problems and conflicts... to destroy the unity of this country."

"These attacks are designed to stop the political process from taking place in Iraq," Allawi told reporters. He added that he expected more such strikes as key Jan. 30 parliamentary elections — the first free vote in Iraq since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958 — get closer.

Illustrating continuing tensions in the region, a bomb exploded at a police checkpoint in Karbala Sunday night, causing damage to surrounding buildings but inflicting no casualties. Police said they cordoned off the area and arrested the attacker.

Shiites, who make up about 60 percent of Iraq's population, have been strong support of the upcoming electoral process, which they expect will reverse the long-time domination of Iraq by the Sunni minority.



Onlookers gaze at destroyed buildings in Najaf, Iraq, on Monday, a day after a car bomb blast killed 67 people and wounded 142.

notoriety, the country's other main religious sect. The insurgency is believed to have been fomented by Sunnis, who made up the majority of Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party leadership.

Shiite officials and clerics blamed the Najaf and Karbala bombings — the worst carnage in Iraq since July — on Sunni insurgents wanting to ignite a sectarian war. The strikes appeared designed to cause massive casualties and eventual reprisals by the Shiites against Sunnis.

"We always have said that we are going to fight and defeat terrorism," Allawi said. "We are going to win definitely and the political process would continue in Iraq."

Najaf's police chief said that among the 50 people detained were those with links to Syria and Iran.

"The police arrested some elements who confessed that they have links with the Syrian intelligence... and a person who confessed he had links with Iranian intelligence since 1995," al-Jazaari said.

The deadly strikes on Sunday — against a funeral procession in Najaf and at a packed bus station in Karbala — once again highlighted the capability of the guerrillas to inflict massive casualties.

They also have undermined confidence in repeated claims by U.S. military commanders that their successful campaign last month to retake the town of Fallujah had dealt a serious blow to the rebellion.

In New York, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan strongly condemned Sunday's

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, at least 1,304 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 11:30 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 75 deaths: Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,166 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 912 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

- No new deaths reported.
- The latest identifications reported by the military.
- No new identifications reported.

violece and called on Iraqis "to come together in a spirit of national reconciliation," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Associated Press Writers Dusan Stojanovic in Baghdad, Gassid Jabbar in Karbala and Abdul Hussein al-Obaidi in Najaf contributed to this report.

Confusion, criticism mark start of hearings for Hussein's aides

BY MARIAM FARM

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Human rights advocates and lawyers say Iraq's hush-hush legal proceedings against Saddam Hussein's ousted regime and the secrecy leading up to the investigative hearings that began late last week threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the trial process.

First, they complain, interim

Prime Minister Ayad Allawi surprised many by announcing the trials of several of Saddam's former regime members would begin sooner than had been expected, although no date was ever set.

Then, a judge made similarly unexpected news — announcing without notice Saturday that two high-profile defendants had already been interrogated. Ali Hassan al-Majid, better known as Chemical Ali for his role in poison gas attacks against the Kurdish minority, and former Defense

Minister Gen. Sultan Hashim Ahmad appeared on that day at a preliminary hearing by investigative Judge Raad al-Juliyi.

Under Iraqi law the investigative hearings are the first step toward a trial. But the timing of the court appearances — just ahead of Jan. 30 general elections — has prompted accusations the legal proceedings were being expedited to boost Allawi's political standing.

"There is no transparency and everything is mysterious," complained Bader Izzat Aref, lawyer

of former deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, one of Saddam's top lieutenants who has been jailed for over a year.

"They (the judges) are under pressure from the executive authority because of the elections."

Al-Juliyi provided few details about the investigative hearings, but said defense lawyers were present with their two clients. The exact date of the hearings wasn't previously announced and no press was invited. Footage of the proceedings was later released. Judges and officials have

not given a date for the start of the criminal trials or released any information on whether Saddam's aides will be tried individually or jointly.

The process has been criticized by foreign and local monitors. "If the whole judicial process is going to have credibility and legitimacy, the government needs to be much more forthcoming with information about the rights that the accused are being given," Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at the New York-based Human Rights Watch, said before Saturday's hearings.

It wasn't even clear what kind of access defense lawyers had been given to their clients, he noted.

Allawi's brief announcement Tuesday that the judicial proceedings would start in a matter of days left many questions unanswered, including whether Saddam himself was going to be among those to appear in court.

"So far, we know nothing about the trials. No one knows how they took the decision or who took the decision," said the process now, said Mahmoud Othman, a prominent Kurdish politician.

"Suddenly they break the news and provide no explanation. People won't take it seriously."

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Pilots fly into action when troops need help

BY BRADLEY GRAHAM
The Washington Post

AL UDEID AIR BASE, Qatar — A giant alien screen, hung inside a warehouse here that has been transformed by the U.S. Air Force into a state-of-the-art operations center, provides a window on the military action that still occupies the skies over Iraq.

One day earlier this month, the radar signatures of a half-dozen U.S. fighter jets could be seen over Mosul, Fallujah and Babil province south of Baghdad, their locations reflecting the best guesses of military commanders about where trouble might flare.

The morning and early afternoon passed without incident, but the quiet was suddenly broken at 3:14 p.m., when soldiers in Mosul reported taking small arms fire.

Nothing gets higher priority for military planes involved in the Iraq mission than troops under attack. Within seconds of the alert, a yellow box with "TIC" — for Troops in Contact — popped up on the video map. The Navy fighter jets that had been over Mosul swooped low in a show of force, and the attackers faded away, forestalling more aggressive measures by the aircraft.

Such action and reaction have become the norm for the air war, a part of the conflict in Iraq that is largely overshadowed by the grimmer, often bloodier efforts of forces on the ground to battle an elusive and determined insurgency.

In contrast to the opening days of the invasion of Iraq 21 months ago, when U.S. warplanes struck a series of planned targets in a display that some in the Pentagon dubbed "shock and awe," the air campaign has become more ad hoc and less showy.

Pilots now take their cues for missions not from Air Force strategists but from Army and Marine commanders who daily submit requests for where they think aircraft can help most in support of ground operations. Instead of taking to the air with a clear idea of what they will strike and when, pilots now largely wait for something to happen — an attack on U.S. forces, for instance, or the discovery of militants ensconced somewhere — and then fly into action.

With the exception of large offensive ground operations, such as last month's assault on Fallujah, days can pass without a bomb being dropped. This has led to using U.S. combat aircraft in nontraditional ways.

Fighters, for instance, now often are employed as surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. Using video and infrared cameras on their airframes, they cruise oil pipelines and power plants, scouting for evidence of attack damage or suspicious activity.

When an opportunity for an airstrike presents itself, the weapon of choice may be nontraditional, particularly if the desire is for a relatively small missile and a quick attack. Predator drones are a case in point. Built originally as spying platforms to linger high above targets, they're being used occasionally as shooters in Iraq, firing Hellfire missiles.

More than 500 U.S. and other coalition aircraft remain on duty in Central Command's area of responsibility, which covers Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. More than a fourth of these are jet fighters: Air Force F-15s, F-16s and A-10s; Navy F-14s and F/A-18s; Marine AV-8s and F/A-18s; and British GR-4s and GR-7s.

At night, these strike aircraft are joined by slower-moving but particularly lethal AC-130 gunships. Operated by Special Operations forces, these propeller-driven planes can pour withering fire from any of

three weapons that poke from their left side: a 25mm Gatling gun, a 40mm cannon or a 105mm howitzer.

An additional 55 or so aircraft are for gathering intelligence.

These include a Global Hawk drone and a small fleet of Predators, as well as high-flying U-2s, signals-scanning RC-135s and ground-spying E-8Cs. Rounding out the air forces are dozens of service planes, including KC-135 fuel tankers and C-130 transport aircraft.

At any given time, the skies over Iraq contain, in the words of one senior officer here, "a cocktail of weapons" from 2,000-pound bombs to 100-pound Hellfire missiles — waiting to be let loose should the need arise. The biggest recent advance came in September, officers said, with the debut of a satellite-guided, 500-pound bomb designated the GBU-38.

The new munition, smaller than older 1,000-pound and 2,000-pound models, can still do serious damage to a building but with less risk of collateral harm to neighboring structures, officers said. Guided by Global Positioning System satellites, the bomb also can operate through cloud cover, unlike a laser-directed version, the GBU-12.

Nonprofit builds, renovates homes for disabled soldiers

The Associated Press

MIDDLEBORO, Mass. — A nonprofit organization has emerged to ease the return of disabled U.S. soldiers from Iraq by constructing homes adapted to their special needs.

Former National Guard Sgt. Peter Damon, who lost his arms in an accident when he was working on a military helicopter, is grateful he will be the first to own such a home built by the group Homes For Our Troops.

"I can imagine what it will look like," Damon said as he addressed about 100 people at a groundbreaking ceremony Sunday in Middleboro, about 35 miles south of Boston. "It will be awesome."

Homes For Our Troops is the brainchild of Wareham's John Gonsalves, a construction supervisor with 20 years' experience.

The Plymouth-based organization founded in February has raised \$450,000 in donations, including some from Japan, Canada,

France, England and New Zealand, Gonsalves said. Homes For Our Troops is working with four disabled servicemembers, including one in California who wants to adapt his existing home.

"We can do this for a lot of families, as long as people support it," Gonsalves said.

Damon's home is expected to be ready sometime in March. The 32-year-old will live there with his wife, Jennifer, 28, and two children, Altura, 7, and Daniel, 2. Special accommodate Damon's needs include, the three-bedroom, 2,000-square-foot ranch-style home will feature keyless entry, lower cabinets, bigger switches and wider hallways. The Standard-Times of West Bedford reported.

Gonsalves said the hope is that the Damons' mortgage on "their little piece of the American dream" will be completely paid off.

The groundbreaking came one day shy of the couple's first anni-

versary and featured a flyover by a Black Hawk helicopter.

"The generosity of Americans has made this happen," Damon said.

Damon was an electrician before he lost his arms carrying a tire on a Black Hawk helicopter while assigned to the 126th Aviation Battalion.

He said the house will give his family the stability and security of knowing they have a roof over their heads as he learns a new profession. He said he has always worked with his hands, and now must learn to work with his mind.

Damon lost his right arm below the elbow and his left arm above the elbow. He has a prosthesis on his left hand. He recuperated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., until his discharge earlier this year.

He is unsure of his future plans, but said he and his wife want to go to college at some point.

"I never imagined the support when I got back," he said.

No torch of freedom here



JOE GIORBANO/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers approach Saddam Hussein's famed Hands of Victory monument in Baghdad. The monument has two sets of crossed swords marking the entrance and exit to a massive military parade ground. The arches were built to celebrate "victory" over Iran. According to GlobalSecurity.org, the metal used to make the swords came from melted down Iraqi weapons from the Iran-Iraq war. Helms thrown at the base of each sword are Iranian, collected on battlefields; and the hands are replicas of Hussein's.

Guardsman graduates via satellite

ST. LOUIS — Spc. Keith Lucas is a National Guardsman on duty in Iraq, where his job is clearing bombs from roads, but that didn't stop him from taking part in his college graduation.

Lucas, 26, participated Saturday in the commencement ceremony at the University of Missouri-St. Louis with the help of a satellite hookup.

Lucas, whose degree is in mass communications, was given a minute-long ovation. His parents, fiancé and other relatives were invited to the stage.

Lucas also is a training specialist for the Missouri Guard's Company A, 1140th Engineer Battalion earned a 3.8 grade-point average. He finished his final course, Business Writing, over the Internet.

Lucas' family accepted the diploma on his behalf.

Two GIs killed in Kuwait accident

KUWAIT CITY — Two U.S. soldiers were killed and two injured in a traffic accident outside Kuwait City on Sunday, the U.S. military said in a statement.

The statement said the "hit-and-run" accident happened in the morning, and the injured soldiers were admitted to a civilian hospital. A Kuwaiti security official said the driver of the vehicle that hit the soldiers later surrendered to police.

The names of the soldiers were withheld pending notification of next of kin, the statement said.

The U.S. military and Kuwaiti authorities were investigating.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Embassy warned Americans here about the possibility of terrorist attacks.

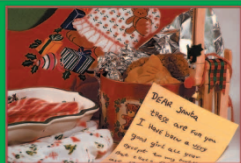
From wire reports



News from the North Pole

SANTA INDICATES THAT THE FOLLOWING BOYS AND GIRLS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD THIS YEAR AND WILL SOON BE RECEIVING A PERSONALIZED NOTE FROM SANTA!

Due to an overwhelming response, I have asked Stars and Stripes to print additional pages to list the names of all the children who wrote to me this year. Please check "News from the North Pole" in your Stars and Stripes on 20, 21, and 22 December. I'll see you very soon!
~Santa



John Abbott	Eric Clark	Hylee Hammar	Gabby McConnell	John Hozelle	Kirsten Williams
Austin Ackley	Shantelle Clark	Anna Hampshire	Justin McConnell	Jacob Rozelle	Jessica Willis
Billie Adams	Adrean Clarke	Emily Hampshire	Rose McGroarty	Madison Rudy	Kristian Wilson
Sapphira Akins	Mick Clarke	Candice Harmon	Dylan McLaughlin	Dominick Ryans	Kaila Wright
Derick Alequin	Dick Clarke	Shelby Hasting	Jake Meier	Ryan Saavedra	Michael Young
Brandon Alligood	Karla Clarke	Alec Hougdaal	Jurien Melonja	Rachel Sampson	Mykianna Young
Nicholas Angyal	Maggie Clearwater	Max Huni	Lindsey Meyer	Tabitha Santos	Kayla Young
Julian Aoki	Seth Cordile	Bridget Huni	Ryan Meyer	Eric Schalch	Kya Zinnell
Tasha Archibald	Shawnee Crabb	Douglas Huni	Aaron Miller	Nathan Schreffler	Naomi Zotti
Heather Arndt	Holle Craven	Melea Huon-	Jessica Miller	Veronica Seguin	Kelly
Nicole Arnett	Kendel Crumley	Dumentat	Billy Miller	Dominik Sestan	Raven
Christian Banks	Zonnia Cruz	Alaxira Huon-	Honesty Mills	Seth Sharrit	Shalyn
Shawn Banks	Philip D'Ambrosio	Dumentat	Tiffany Min	Savannah Shaw	Keely
Elaine Baptist	Danielle Davis	Zachary Hynes	Justus Mittag	Macie Shimon	Justina
Zachary Barnhart	Kaitlynn Decker	Samantha Hynes	Ryan Mittag	Victoria Sloan	Christopher
Bryce Basso	Courtney Disman	Julia Iovine	Tiana Mixon	Ariel Smith	Tyler
Mikala Basso	Brianna Dukes	Jennifer Irizarry	Rayvean Moment	Gregory Smith	Kevin
Jacob Battle	Damien Dunlap	Jonathan Irizarry	Kaitlyn Muelther	Claire Standaert	Chris
Alex Beck	Shane Eaton	Micaella Jacildo	Sean Myers	Richard Standaert	Katherine
Gavin Beckel	Jenna Eidem	Bret Jacobi	Mackenzie Neal	Yanna Starr	Luca
Garrett Becker	Mezzan El Sayed	Joe Jamison	Yasmane Newton	Terence Stephens	Chris
Brandice Beckwith	Louis Epperson	Sean Jamison	Tia Nichols	Dennis Stevens	Monica
Sterling Beckwith	DeMarcus Evans	TJ Johnson	Alexis Novotny	Tiffany Still	Daniel
Chris Beish	Cameron Falk	Blaine Johnson	Brandon Odell	Kayla Strauther	Victoria
Gabrielle Beish	Cheyann Falk	Dajah Johnson	Sean Orcutt	Aaron Strickland	Michelle
Amiere Bell	Kodey Falk	Alyssa Jones	Faith Owens	Lesley Sullivan	Jeannette
Kiera Bennett	Kaleb Falk	Colby Juliana	Grace Owens	Jacob Sutterfield	Jesse
Samantha Bidingier	Kaitlynn Farrar	Sophie Kane	Arianna Padilla	Kaitlyn Talley	Sammy
Kieran Bloomer	Daniel Fassnacht	Aaron Kuhn	Nico Padilla	Austin Talley	Caro
Connor Bloomer	Brock Ferraro	Arielle Keller	Elizabeth Paez	Kendra Taylor	Maguire
Camille Boodoosingh	Suzanne Ferraro	Kyle Kempke	Kelsey Penny	Haley Thompson	Jeannette
Evan Borzotra	Emily Fitzpatrick	Loni Kempke	Emily Peters	Carly Thompson	Cassidy
Fox Borzotra	Katherine Flanigan	Miraj Killingsworth	Elijah Pleasants	Caylee Tijerina	Chasmynn
Malachi Bowden	Annabella Floro	Xavier Kinchen	Gwendolynn Porter	Oscar Torres	Chantal
Sierra Bowyer	Joey Flynn	Michael Kinsey	Sebastian Porter	Lena Trageser	Danika
Karee Boyens	Maggie Flynn	Timothy Kubista	Steven Potter	Cathleen Trevino	Elden
Cheyenne Bresley	Sammy Flynn	Charles Kuhn	Danien Pratt	Damon Turcotte	James
Shelby Britt	Maliyah Ford	Johanna Kuhn	Brandie Price	Zachary Tutko	Natalie
Aileen Brokamp	Daphne Fowler	Stephen Lane	Daniel Price	Kenyon Twing	Nathaniel
Gavin Brokos	Bobbie Gagnon	Joshua Lane	Martin Pringle	Jacie Uppingco	Preston
Nolan Brokos	Nicholas Galles	Jason Lankford	Alexa Prunty	Keana Utsey	Sarah
Heather Brown	Jarrah Gambrazzio	Stephanie Larsen	Christopher Prunty	Hakeem Valcin	Shanice
Liam Brown	NaTosha Ganaway	Terrell Lawrence	Francesca Pulisci	Damien J. Vasquez	Krista
Russell Brown	Allison Garry	Makkai Legette	Will Quinton	Alex Vibber	Tanner
Ashelee Bullock	Micki Gonzales	Mataya Legette	Zach Rady	Jason Wareham	Joie
Alexander Burch	Gabi Gonzales	Marc Lehman	Ryan Ramos	Xavier Warren	Alexandra
Olivia Burch	Izzabel Graham	Ethan Leibl	Cole Ramos	Kwaniquea	Ethan
Tyriq Burnett	Gunnar Gransberg	Destiny Madden	Katlyn Reigel	Washington	Timmy
Dalisa Caldwell	Elizabeth Gray	Raymond Maldonado	Shadda Resendez	Joshua Watson	Sam
Shae Calvin	Chelsea Grenier	JoAnna Malko	Jeffrey Rhodes	Marlin Watson	Kendra
Jesse Camacho	Breanna Grim	Joshua Malong, Jr.	Courtney Richardson	Michelle Weber	Michael
Tatiana Carter	Zachary Grim	Maelin Manalo	Manuel Rivera	A'nae Weldon	Misty
Jeremy Carter	Nick Groen	Isaiah Margis	Maeve Roach	Sarah Wellman	
Crystal Castille	David Guilder	Iris Martinez	Austin Roberts	Ella Wellman	
Courtney Chapman	Tatiana Gutka	Jeffrey Matthews	Cheyenne Roberts	Summer Werner	
Kaitlyn Chasteen	Teagan Gutka	Austin Mawn	Taylor Robinson	Skyler Werner	
Kaya Choate	Jayson Haiss	Jennifer Maxwell	Caine Robinson	Amani Westry	
Scout Churchwell	Victoria Hall	Connor Mayfield	Marleny Rodriguez	Chloe White	
Kristen Clady	Erik Hall	Autumn McAllister	Katlyn Rosas	Lorenzo Williams	

In Iraq, processing claims a work in progress

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

RADWANIYAH, Iraq — In a pair of cramped concrete buildings straddling the walls of Camp Victory, the U.S. military is trying to make things right.

Each Saturday, a handful of soldiers staff a regional government office, paying out claims for damage mistakenly done to Iraqi lives and property.

On an average weekend, the Government Information Center in Radwaniyah collects about 30 claims. U.S. military lawyers approve about half of those, with payouts ranging from a few hundred dollars to upward of \$15,000.

The process can take weeks or months and claims filed when one U.S. unit was operating in a certain area are sometimes passed on to the next to arrive. The process is repeated at a dozen other centers across Iraq.

"I cannot make any promises as to whether your claim will be approved, but I will guarantee you that all of the facts get to the judge," Staff Sgt. Jared Robinson, of the 256th Brigade Combat Team, tells one man, whose claim for damaged property had been pending for months.

Robinson, 25, of Jennings, La., is literally the bag man. If a claim is approved, identities are confirmed and the paperwork is in order, Robinson reaches into a desert camouflage Army truck, then counts out the appropriate amount in crisp greenbacks.

"They always want new bills: in large denominations," he joked during a break from the process. Robinson, a Guardsman



BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Staff Sgt. Darryl Carter looks on as Staff Sgt. Jared Robinson of the 256th Brigade Combat Team hands cash over to an Iraqi citizen for damage caused to his property by the U.S. military.

like the rest of the 256th, was finishing his second year of law school when the brigade was called to active duty.

Inside, Spc. Monty Johnson, 21, of Carencro, La., processes the claims.

He has each recipient read and sign paperwork releasing the military from any future claims. Johnson was a nursing student at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette before the call-up.

Most times, the short meetings end with a handshake and profuse thanks. But the process is not without its contradictions.

In one case, a 256th Brigade tank ran over an Iraqi man and his taxi.

The man lost his leg and his livelihood. The military approved his claim, awarding him \$10,000.

In another case, U.S. soldiers mistakenly killed three male members of an Iraqi fam-

ily near Fallujah. The military awarded that family \$9,700.

"At first, many local people didn't trust it," said the Iraqi translator running the center who identified himself only as Salladin.

"They think it's a center to collect information from people. But after the first compensation was paid, they see."

For the soldiers, the claims process is a work in progress.

"Some of the people are still a little skeptical," said Staff Sgt. Darryl Carter, of Plain Dealing, La. "When their claims are denied, they're disappointed, but I've never seen anyone really upset."

"The quicker we get the claim processed and adjudicated, we're better off."

As Saturday's claims session drew to a close, around 10 claims had been paid. But Carter announced he had one more.

"This is the surprise I had for you," he told Salladin.

Carter handed over a file containing a case that had languished since June. A young girl was hit in the face with bullet fragments, damaging both her eyes. She was taken to a U.S. military hospital in Germany, but doctors couldn't do much for her. She lost one eye, and is blind in the other.

Her father had tried to balance his work and caring for her, but couldn't afford the medication to keep down inflammation in the remaining eye. Carter had resubmitted the claim, which was originally denied. The father received \$3,000.

"Until now, if you asked me, I would not believe it," Salladin said. "But here it is."

E-mail: Joseph Giordano at giordono@pstrips.osd.mil

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IN THE STATES

Bush criticizes Iraqi troops, defends Rumsfeld

BY JENNIFER LOVEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush pointedly acknowledged Monday that U.S.-trained Iraqi troops are not ready to take over their country's security, and cautioned that next month's elections there are only the beginning of a

long process toward democracy.

"I certainly don't expect the process to be trouble-free," Bush said at a year-end news conference in which he signaled tough

spending cuts to come and declined to offer specific solutions to Social Security's solvency.

Bush also gave a fresh vote of confidence to embattled Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. "He's doing a very fine job," the president said.

The 55-minute session, the 17th solo news conference of his presidency, was part of Bush's effort to seize the momentum from his re-election victory and push several ambitious domestic and foreign policy priorities in his second term.

On Iraq, where a bloody insurgency continues unabated, Bush urged the American people to remain patient well beyond the Jan. 30 elections to give Iraqis time to craft a constitution and strengthen their security forces.

"The elections in January are the beginning of a process and it is important for the American people to understand that," he said.

Critics have raised questions about whether enough U.S. troops are in Iraq to bring security for the elections.

"No question about it. The bombers are having an effect" on Americans' belief in success in Iraq, Bush said, while adding that his own confidence remains unshaken.

Bush said "I would call the results mixed" on a U.S. effort to put Iraqi security in the hands of its own people. He said U.S. officials in charge of the effort will "spend a lot of time and effort" on fixing the problem by improving the Iraqi command structure.

Essential to the American strategy for withdrawing its troops from Iraq is the effort to train Iraqi forces for security and combat. But doubts have been raised from several quarters about the effectiveness of the effort and the reliability of Iraqi security forces.

On domestic issues, Bush said he will submit a federal budget that will cut the deficit in half in five years in part by asking for strict spending discipline. His fiscal 2006 budget is due to Congress in February.

"We'll submit a budget that fits the times. It will provide every tool and resource to the military, will protect the homeland,

and meet other priorities of the government," he said.

As for Rumsfeld, a growing number of lawmakers, including Republicans, have voiced no confidence in the defense secretary.

But Bush defended his Pentagon chief.

"Beneath that rough and gruff

no-nonsense demeanor is a good human being who cares deeply about the military and the grief that war causes," Bush said, battling away criticism that Rumsfeld had not personally signed condolence letters to the families of troops who have died.

Bush defended his close but

"complex" ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he has had disagreements over the war on terror and, more recently, over the disputed elections in Ukraine. U.S. and Russian officials said Monday that Bush and Putin would meet in Slovakia on Feb. 24 as part of an ef-

fort to improve U.S. relations with European nations.

Bush didn't tip his hand about who might be nominated to be the new national intelligence director — a post created by the largest overhaul of U.S. intelligence-gathering in a half-century that Bush signed into law last week.



Bush



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Jackson's lawyers seek delay in molestation case

By PAUL CHAVEZ

The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — Michael Jackson's lawyers went to court Monday to seek a six-week delay in his child molestation trial, saying they need the extra time to sort through 14,000 pages of evidence filed by prosecutors over the past two months.

Prosecutors had been expected to argue Monday that they should be allowed to present at Jackson's trial evidence of wrongdoing in the pop star's past. But according to a court calendar released Monday, that motion won't be brought up until next month.

In another motion made public last week, Jackson's attorneys asked that the trial, scheduled to begin Jan. 31, be delayed until mid-March. That motion is to be argued at Monday's hearing.

Jackson, 46, is charged with molesting a boy, conspiracy and administering an intoxicating agent, alcohol, to his alleged victim. The entertainer — who on Friday personally greeted a group of children touring his Neverland Ranch before the Christmas holidays — was not required to attend this week's hearings.

They also asked that the charges against Jackson be dismissed on grounds of "vindictive prosecution and outrageous government conduct," pointing to the execution of more than 100 search warrants including this month's unusual raid on Jackson's estate near Los Olivos. Superior Court Judge Rodney Melville previously rejected a similar defense effort that sought removal of District Attorney Tom Snedden.

Hearings on pretrial motions were scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday as well.



Defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. arrives for a pretrial hearing in the Michael Jackson child molestation case at the Santa Barbara County courthouse in Santa Maria, Calif., on Monday.

Cold winds blow over East Coast

The Associated Press

Freezing temperatures hit northern Florida on Monday morning and snow made mountain highways treacherous in the Appalachians as the first big cold wave of the season swept southward.

Even North Carolina's Outer Banks got a rare seaside dusting of snow, and more than 2 feet fell near the Great Lakes.

The blast of Arctic air — one day before the official start of winter — drove temperatures in the Florida Panhandle down to 31 degrees at Crestview, 32 at Pensacola.

Greensboro, N.C., posted a record low for Dec. 20 at 9, and

Crossville, Tenn., dropped to 6. Farther north, it was 18 below zero at 9 a.m. at Massena, N.Y., with a wind chill of 28 below, the National Weather Service said.

An autistic 9-year-old boy was missing in the woods near South Williamsport, Pa., where temperatures fell into the single digits during the night. Officials appealed to residents to search their property Monday for Logan Mitchell, who was last seen Saturday.

Ice pavement was blamed for at least two traffic deaths in New Jersey. The icy wind sucked up moisture from the Great Lakes and dumped 26 inches of snow on Michigan City in northern Indiana.

Half of Americans fret about debt, poll finds

By WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — During a season with shoppers racing about to wrap up holiday spending, half of Americans say they worry about their overall level of debt, an Associated Press poll found.

That includes many — about two in 10 of those surveyed — who say they stay worried about their debt level most or all of the time.

Those debts can come from home and car loans as well as credit cards — even more so with December buying sprees. Three-fourths in the poll said they have credit cards.

Most people who have credit cards say they work to keep control of them, but one in six with cards say they don't trust their own spending with plastic. Young adults and those who make less than \$25,000 a year were most likely to doubt their own ability to manage credit cards.

Most who have credit cards say they try to keep those card debts under control. But some still have trouble.

One-fourth of credit card users say they use plastic to buy things when they don't have the money.

More than 1 million people file for personal bankruptcy each year, said Stephen Brobeck, executive director of the Consumer Federation of America.

"My strong sense from looking at lots of data, is that the number of people with debt problems is declining, but the number with severe debt problems is increasing," he said.

The total amount of revolving credit debt, such as that caused by credit cards, was just over \$600 billion five years ago and is almost \$800 billion now, according to the Federal Reserve.

In the survey, about 10 percent

of those with credit cards said they have missed making their minimum payment during the past six months.

Economists say people are missing fewer credit card payments by juggling their debts and getting new credit cards.

In recent years, low interest rates have helped many people get home equity loans and pay off credit card debts. But that simply shifts the debt around.

"We live in an age of easy money and people pull out the plastic to medicate their pain," said Chris Packard, a mental health therapist from Gilbert, Ariz.

"I have had patients who used their credit cards to purchase spouses, to appease depression or anxiety or to try to satisfy an out-of-control child," Packard said.

Experiencing the highest levels of stress from debts were people at their credit card spending limit, those who are unmarried and have children, those without jobs and minorities.

Those with the lowest levels of stress from debt were retirees, Republicans, married people, college graduates and people between ages 30 and 49.

Those groups' stress levels were measured based on their responses to a series of questions asked of 1,000 adults about debt and stress.

About four in 10 of all people questioned said their total debt is at least "somewhat stressful." Also, more than half said their debt will cause them problems over the next five years.

The AP-Ipsos poll of 1,000 adults was taken Dec. 6-8. It has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points, slightly larger for the 790 people with credit cards.

Trevor Tompkins, Associated Press manager of news surveys, contributed to this story.

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IN THE WORLD

Russia's freedom steps backward

Watchdog faults Putin as nation restricts rights

By JUDITH INGRAM
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russia has restricted rights to such an extent that it has joined the countries that are not free for the first time since the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, Freedom House said Monday, marking Moscow's march away from the Western democracies it has embraced as diplomatic partners.

"This setback for freedom represented the year's most important political trend," the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization wrote in its annual study, *Freedom in the World 2005*.

Freedom House noted increased Kremlin control over national television and other media, limitations on local government, and parliamentary and presidential elections it said were neither free nor fair.

"Russia's step backward into the 'not free' category is the culmination of a growing trend under President Vladimir Putin to concentrate political authority, harass and intimidate the media, and politicize the country's law-enforcement system," Executive Director Jennifer Windsor said.

"These moves mark a dangerous and disturbing drift toward authoritarianism in Russia, made more worrisome by President Putin's recent heavy-handed med-



ITAR-TASS/AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with the Cabinet on Monday in Moscow's Kremlin. Freedom House, a U.S.-based organization that tracks the progress of political rights and civil liberties across the world, said Monday that Russia had declined to the status of "not free,"

dling in political developments in neighboring countries, such as Ukraine."

The report accused Putin of exploiting the terrorist seizure of a school in southern Russia to ram through what Freedom House called the dismantlement of local authority. In the wake of the attack, which killed more than 330 people, Putin introduced a plan to end the election of governors by popular vote and the election of legislators in individual races.

Currently, the 450 seats in the lower house of parliament are equally split between those filled through party lists and those contested in district races.

The Russian Foreign Ministry

had no immediate comment on the report, which said that Russia had reached its lowest point where political rights and civic freedoms are concerned since 1989. Freedom House said that on balance, the world saw increased freedom in 2004; 26 countries showed gains while 11 showed decline.

Of the world's 192 countries, it judged 46 percent free, 26 percent not free, and the rest partly free. Eight rated as the most repressive: Burma, Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Turkmenistan.

The NGO said that only Central and Eastern Europe had seen "dramatic progress" over the

past year. It noted that Bosnia-Herzegovina's rating had improved following the first elections introduced entirely by Bosnian institutions.

In the Middle East, Freedom House rated just Israel as free. Five countries in the region, including Jordan and Yemen, are partly free, and 12 are not free. It said the territories occupied by Israel and run by the Palestinian Authority were not free.

Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Qatar registered modest gains, Freedom House said.

It registered democratic gains in the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Ukraine, where popular protests forced the cancellation of the results of fraudulent elections over the past 13 months.

"The positive experiences in Georgia and Ukraine indicate that democratic ferment and non-violent civic protest are potent forces for political change," Windsor said. "They also reinforce freedom's gradual global advance."

The former Soviet republics of Belarus, Armenia and Lithuania saw setbacks — the first two due to the authorities' increasingly harsh response to dissent, and the latter because of "worrying questions about the full autonomy of Lithuania's political leadership" in the wake of President Rolandas Paksas' impeachment amid allegations of influence by the Russian mafia.

Freedom House, a Washington-based, nonpartisan group, was founded nearly 60 years ago by Americans concerned about the rise to democracy in Poland, advocacy, research and training to encourage and nurture democracy.

Six killed in firefight at Afghan checkpoint

The Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — A vehicle carrying a group of suspected Taliban fighters attacked a military checkpoint in southern Afghanistan, sparking a firefight that left six dead and at least four wounded, police said Monday.

Kandahar police chief Khan Mohammed said the attack occurred at 6 p.m. Sunday in Maiwand district, 90 miles west of Kandahar city.

The exchange of gunfire killed four soldiers and a civilian, and the attackers left behind the body of one fighter as they drove away, police said. Security forces were pursuing them.

In a separate incident, two American soldiers were wounded Saturday when their patrol came under small arms fire northeast of Shinjari, in adjacent Zabul province, U.S. Maj. Mark McCann told reporters.

Both were evacuated after the firefight and are in stable condition awaiting transport to a U.S. medical facility in Germany, he said.

It was unclear how many attackers were involved, but McCann said it likely was no more than five.

Also Monday, international peacekeepers said they had found one of the largest ammunition caches yet at a storage facility on the southern outskirts of the capital.

A Canadian explosives disposal squad that went to the site after a tip from a local man found more than 500 rockets and mortar rounds. The weapons will be destroyed.

"We are seeing this type of thing occurring more frequently where Afghans are disclosing the location of these weapons" said Lt. Cmdr. Ken MacKillop, a spokesman for the International Security Assistance Force.

"This is an indication that the Afghan people are feeling safer now and that they believe that they no longer need to rely on the use of these weapons and ammunition in order to survive."

AIDS marks its toll on orphans in Zimbabwe

The Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Nearly a million children in Zimbabwe have lost one or both parents to AIDS and HIV-related illnesses, the United Nations Children's Fund said Monday.

Girls as young as nine were caring for siblings or for ailing parents and relatives in Zimbabwe, UNICEF said in its annual *State of the World's Children* report.

With an estimated 26 percent of the country's 12.5 million people infected with HIV, orphans were dropping out of school, often

Report: Nearly a million have lost parents due to HIV-related illnesses

suffered from malnutrition and were "more likely to be involved in hazardous forms of labor" from inducing prostitution, said Pesto Kavishve, UNICEF's chief representative in Harare.

The fund's report on Zimbabwe said the social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS were underscored by the decline in life expectancy from age 52 to 37 since

1990.

In traditionally polygamous African societies, HIV is mostly spread by heterosexual contact as well as needles and blades contaminated with infected blood.

Zimbabwe is facing its worst economic crisis since independence, with soaring prices and record unemployment. Public health services have crumbled.

Most of the estimated 2,000 people who die from AIDS-related illnesses each week are unable to afford treatment and are usually sent home to die if they have been briefly hospitalized.

The nation is suffering acute shortages of hard currency and essential imports, including medicines.

The government estimates that 26 percent of Zimbabwe's people are infected with HIV/AIDS, but officials acknowledge the rate could be higher because of a stigma that leaves many conditions unreported as being HIV-related.

Two skiers killed in avalanche

INNSBRUCK, Austria — Avalanches killed two skiers and seriously injured another Monday, and experts warned that recent storms have created unstable conditions for more snow slides in Austria's Alps.

A 41-year-old American and a 39-year-old German died in an avalanche in Lech am Arlberg in the southwestern province of Vorarlberg that also critically injured the American's wife, also 41, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Officials did not immediately release the names or hometowns of the victims, who were located after a 30-minute search by 15 mountain rescue experts using a pair of specially trained dogs.

They said the German was dead at the scene and that the American died later at a hospital where he had been airlifted by helicopter.

The victims were skiing off-trail in deep powder and were not wearing avalanche transmitters that emit a signal to help rescuers locate people buried in snow, Austrian television reported.

Army chief to be replaced

PODGORICA, Serbia-Montenegro — The head of the Serbia-Montenegro army and some of his closest associates could be replaced later this week as part of routine staff changes, the president of tiny Montenegro was quoted as saying on Monday.

Filip Vujanovic told Montenegrin daily Pobjeda that the change among the top generals, many of whom are retiring, could take place at a session of the country's top defense body on Friday.

Vujanovic added that "we will appoint not only the new army chief of staff, but also new members of the army headquarters as some of the people will retire."

It was not immediately clear who could replace Gen. Branko Kruga and his associates. Serbia-Montenegro officials have said that Kruga's retirement was routine and expected.

Vujanovic said that "the most important thing is that (the new army chief of staff) be a reformist, a man that will carry out sensitive reforms, including reduction of the army's troops."

From The Associated Press

OPINION

Time is right for 'chemical Ali' to face trial

Los Angeles Times

There are plenty of complications involved in trying Saddam Hussein and others from his regime for crimes committed against the Iraqi people, but none that argues for further delay. Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was right to announce that some of the war-crimes trials would start this week, including that of Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," a cousin of Saddam's believed to have used poison gas to murder thousands of Kurds.

If the trials don't get under way, Saddam and his henchmen may never face justice. It's true that Allawi's every move in the run-up to the Jan. 30 elections is politically motivated, especially now that he has declared his own candidacy. But it could be a long wait before a democratic government with more legitimacy could initiate these proceedings, and the mostly Sunni defendants would still accuse the Sami defendants of unfairness. Indeed, the legal safeguards afforded the defendants, combined with the weight of the evidence, will determine whether these trials are deemed credible. For that reason, the government should televise the proceedings.

There is also a matter of basic fairness and due process. Keeping Saddam's lieu-

tenants indefinitely locked up without charging them is hardly the way to launch a new democracy, even if Washington has set a poor example at Guantanamo Bay.

It's almost unavoidable, as the Nuremberg war crimes trials showed, that these trials will be seen to some extent as "victim's justice."

In 1945, Chief Justice of the United States Harlan Fiske Stone called the prosecution being led by his colleague Robert Jackson a "high-grade lynching party."

It's a foregone conclusion that Saddam and his cohorts, like the Nazis, are guilty of heinous crimes. The accomplishment of Nuremberg was to shock and re-educate the German people by creating a documentary record of the Nazi regime's crimes and atrocities. In a traumatized Iraq, trials could have a similarly cathartic effect.

The real question is whether Iraq's judges are capable of carrying out the trials. The prosecutors need to work their way through mounds of documents and carefully prepare for belligerent defendants, especially the canny Saddam, who will attempt, as much as possible, to disrupt the proceedings and turn them into a circus.

The Bush administration, which has refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the permanent International Criminal Court in The Hague, has asked for the help



The war-crimes trial for Ali Hassan al-Majid, who is shown in Beirut, Lebanon, last year, began this week. Al-Majid, a member of Saddam Hussein's government, is known as "Chemical Ali."

of the United Nations in assisting prosecutors and judges. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has disgracefully refused to help, claiming that Iraq's death penalty prevents the United Nations from participating. But that hasn't prevented the United Nations from helping to carry out judicial reform in Rwanda and Afghanistan, which have the death penalty.

Those seeking to postpone justice can always point to some logistical or political reason for putting off these trials. But given their length — the main Nuremberg war crimes trial dragged on for more than a year, and former Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic continues to tie up the proceedings in his trial at The Hague — Allawi is right to want to get started.

Democracy in Afghanistan can be an example for Iraq

BY DONALD RUMSFELD

"The ladies are coming to you, because the future belongs to us — to us and our children."

Afghanistan, October 2004

Contrast that with this quote about women from a Taliban minister only a few years ago: "It's like having a flower, or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for yourself to look at. ... It is not supposed to be taken out of the house."

On Dec. 7, I attended the inauguration of the first democratically elected national leader in Afghanistan's history.

It is something we would have considered not just unlikely, or naive, but downright extraordinary not that long ago.

History has a way of overcoming expectations and conventional wisdom. In my lifetime, I have seen Germany become a genocidal and expansionist dictatorship and then a democratic ally of the United States within a span of a relatively few years. I have seen the Berlin Wall first rise and then fall — along with the totalitarian empire that built it.

Consider Afghanistan's October election, another such watershed moment in history. Just over three years ago, an extremist, barbaric regime ruled that country — a country that had suffered through decades of civil war, drought and Soviet occupation, and had no experience with democracy or individual rights. The Taliban bent women for exposing their ankles, forbade them from attending school, walking unaccompanied on city streets or seeing a male doctor. Kabul's soccer stadium was used not for soccer, but for public executions.

And as Americans know all too well, Afghanistan served as the base for al-Qaida's planning, training and operations. Osama

bin Laden was the Taliban's favored guest. On Oct. 9, 2004, as a result of the bravery and hard work of coalition forces and, most of all, the Afghan people, more than 8 million people were able to vote — some 40 percent of them women — in the first free elections in Afghanistan's history.

In addition, 3 million Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland since 2002 and it is estimated that the economy is growing at a rate of some 7 percent per year.

Thousands of brave young men have volunteered to serve in Afghanistan's multiethnic army, which is taking the fight to extremists and those terrorists who may still be harboring fantasies of returning to power and privilege.

And Kabul's soccer stadium is now used not for public beheadings, but for soccer.

None of this was considered possible, much less likely, by much if not most of so-called expert opinion three years ago.

The mantra is now familiar: Afghanistan could not pursue democracy because it was neglected and ignored by a Bush administration obsessed with Iraq, that the Taliban were making a comeback and al-Qaida was on the march; that democra-

cy and voting were irrevocably alien to the Afghan people and their culture.

In every instance, the critics were wrong. Afghans — including millions of women — braved threats and intimidation, traveled great distances, and waited in line for hours to cast ballots for their first democratically elected president. They will do so again next year when Afghanistan has its parliamentary elections — another important milestone, as well as a logistical and security challenge.

In Iraq, many of the widely popular negative sentiments are the same as we heard about Afghanistan, but so too is the potential for success. We are still less than two years from when Iraq was ruled by a murderous dictator who brutalized his country, looted its wealth and neglected its infrastructure.

No doubt the Iraq insurgency is more widespread, the casualties heavier, the obstacles seemingly more daunting. The reward for success — a free and peaceful Iraq — and the unthinkable consequences of failure are extraordinarily high, as the extremists well know. They have so much to lose.

Democratic elections in Iraq will deal a

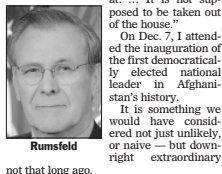
similarly devastating blow to the terrorists seeking to take that country back to a dark place. And the impact will be felt not just in Iraq — wedged as it is between two dangerous regimes in the heart of the Middle East — but in that entire region.

So we should take stock — and take pride — in what has been accomplished in the global war on terror, but stay vigilant and clear-eyed about the challenges ahead in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. And these challenges are real.

As in Afghanistan, success in Iraq will come from the perseverance of the free world, embodied by the valor and professionalism of the men and women in uniform, the coalition forces, and the new Iraqi security forces who are risking their lives every day, working with the newly liberated people to overcome intimidation and violence and to build a better life and future for themselves and their families.

In the last analyses, it will be up to the Iraqi people and I believe they have a good crack at making it. I say this because the great sweep of human history is for freedom. And that is on our side.

Donald Rumsfeld is secretary of defense.



Rumsfeld

Mallard Fillmore



BY BRUCE TINSLEY

AFRTS Television Schedule

Updated program listings are available on the first scoreboard page in the sports section or AFRTS's Web site at <http://myaftr.dodmedia.osd.mil/>

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2004

	(AFN-FAMILY)	(AFN-MOVIE)	(AFN-EUROPE)	(AFN-KOREA)	(AFN-NEWS)	(AFN-SPORTS)	(SPECTRUM)	(AFN-PACIFIC)
9:00	The Wild Thornberrys	Movie *** "Danger Island"	Dr. Phil	Jocquelyn	Nightline	College Basketball Princeton at Temple (Taped)	30-Minute Meals	Jocquelyn
9:30	The Wild Thornberrys	1993 Richard Dreyfuss, Kathy Ireland. Plane crash survivors battle tropical forces.	Headline News	Headline News	Army Newsweek		Sweet Dreams	Headline News
10:00	ChalkZone (E)		(3:46) Oprah Winfrey	ESPNs	Hardball With Chris Matthews		Best for Less	ESPNs
10:30	ChalkZone River adventure.		(3:46) Guiding Light	Advisory Board			Stripped	Pacific Report
11:00	Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius	10:48 Movie *** "Ocean's Eleven" (2000) George Clooney. A suave ex-con assembles a team to rob a casino vault.	(1:17) General Hospital	NFL Football New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins. From Pro Player Stadium in Miami.	The O'Reilly Factor	SportsCenter	E News	NFL Football New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins. From Pro Player Stadium in Miami.
11:30	Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius	Kim Possible (E)	Headline News	Headline News	FOX News	NBA Basketball Teams to Be Announced.	The King of Queens	Headline News
12:00	Kim Possible		Judge Judy	Judge Judy			Girlfriends	Headline News
12:30	Planet's Funniest Animals	Movie *** "Pretzels in Pink"	Today Dennis Quaid holiday farewells.	Headline News	Fox and Friends		Charmed "Central Charming"	Pacific Report
13:00	Movie *** "The Wild Thornberry Movie" (2000) Voices of Lacey Chabert, Tom Kane.		Headline News	Headline News	Fox and Friends		Aly McBeal "The Ex-Files"	ESPNs
13:30	Movie *** "The Fan" (1996) Robert De Niro. A jumping baseball star is stalked by a psychotic admirer.	(2:51) Movie *** "The Fan" (1996) Robert De Niro. A jumping baseball star is stalked by a psychotic admirer.	I Spy	The Tonight Show	American Morning	NBA Basketball Teams to Be Announced.	Any Day Now "Stay of Execution"	The Tonight Show
14:00	Full House		Animenics	Headline News	CNN Live Today		ER "A Saint in the City"	Headline News
14:30	Pokémon		All Grown Up	Late Show			Law & Order "True North"	Late Show
16:00	Yu-Gi-Oh!		Teen Kids News (E)	Headline News			The Simpsons	Headline News
17:00	Asahi! Real Monsters	The Entertainers	Headline News	The Late Late Show	FOX News	SportsCenter	The Simpsons	The Late Late Show
17:30	Rocket Power	Behind the Scenes	Headline News	Dennis Miller			Everybody Loves Raymond	Dennis Miller
18:00	SpongeBob SquarePants	Entertainment Tonight	AFN Evening News	Headline News	FOX News	NFL Football New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins. From Pro Player Stadium in Miami.	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Lucky Strike"	Entertainment Studios.com
18:30	Rugrats	Entertainment Tonight	Smallville "Hemlock"	Headline News	FOX News		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Lucky Strike"	The Hot List
19:00	Oliver, the Other Reindeer	Movie *** "Vertical Limit" (2000) Chris O'Donnell, Bill Paxton. Mountain climbers are trapped in an icy cave on K2.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
20:00	Everwood "My Funny Valentine"	Movie *** "Double Platinum" (1999) Diana Ross. A rising young singer's mother steps back into her life.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
21:00	Sister, Sister "Do!"	(1:15) Movie *** "Double Platinum" (1999) Diana Ross. A rising young singer's mother steps back into her life.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
21:30	Sister, Sister "The Natural"	Movie *** "Vertical Limit" (2000) Chris O'Donnell, Bill Paxton. Mountain climbers are trapped in an icy cave on K2.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
22:00	The Cosby Show "Trust Me"	Movie *** "Double Platinum" (1999) Diana Ross. A rising young singer's mother steps back into her life.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
22:30	Home Improvement	Movie *** "Bridget Jones's Diary" (2001) Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
23:00	Touched by an Angel "The Tigger"	Movie *** "Bridget Jones's Diary" (2001) Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America
23:30			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Good Morning America

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2004

00:00	Asahi! Real Monsters	(1:16) Movie *** "Bridget Jones's Diary" (2001) Renée Zellweger, Hugh Grant.	(11:30) Late Show	Play With Me Sesame	Headline News	SportsCenter	Late Night	Play With Me Sesame
00:30	Rocket Power		Access Hollywood	Bear in the Big Blue House	NBC Nightly News			Bear in the Big Blue House
1:00	SpongeBob SquarePants	(3:58) Movie *** "Opposing Forces" (1999) Dennis Quaid. A deranged survival camp leader wages real war on recruits.	College Basketball Texas Tech at Iowa (Live)	Blue's Clues "Nature"	ABC World News Tonight	Sonic Bowl Manila Insider	Star Trek: Enterprise "North Star"	Blue's Clues "Nature"
1:30	Rugrats		Headline News	Wheel of Fortune	CBS Evening News	(4:45) College Football	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation "Lucky Strike"	Wheel of Fortune
2:00	Oliver, the Other Reindeer		Headline News	Dr. Phil	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer	Chances Sports Bowl - Georgia Tech vs. Syracuse. From Orlando, Fla. (Live)	Dr. Phil	Dr. Phil
2:30			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Oprah Winfrey
3:00	Everwood "My Funny Valentine"	Movie *** "Vertical Limit" (2000) Chris O'Donnell, Bill Paxton. Mountain climbers are trapped in an icy cave on K2.	Headline News	Oprah Winfrey	Hannity & Colmes		Friends	NBC Nightly News
3:30	Sister, Sister "Do!"	Movie *** "Vertical Limit" (2000) Chris O'Donnell, Bill Paxton. Mountain climbers are trapped in an icy cave on K2.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Judge Judy
4:00	Sister, Sister "The Natural"	Movie *** "Double Platinum" (1999) Diana Ross. A rising young singer's mother steps back into her life.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Friends	Judge Judy
4:30	Sesame Street (E)	(1:15) Movie *** "Double Platinum" (1999) Diana Ross. A rising young singer's mother steps back into her life.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	(1:15) SportsCenter	Breathingspace Yoga	Access Hollywood
5:00	Barney & Friends (E)		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Caribbean Workout	(25) Guiding Light
5:30	Blair's Clues		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	(2:15) ESPNs	Body Shopping	(25) General Hospital
6:00	Dragon Tales (E)	The Entertainers	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News	NFL Total Access	Typical Mary Ellen	Sylvester & Tweety
6:30	Bob the Builder		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		The View	Buzz Lightyear of Star
7:00	The Wiggles "Food"	Behind the Scenes	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	The Family Doggys
8:00	Dora the Explorer	Entertainment Tonight	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
9:00	The Wild Thornberrys	Movie "The Woman's Courage" (1994) Patty Duke, Margot Kidder. A killer stalks the witnesses who told and against him.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
9:30	The Wild Thornberrys		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
10:00	ChalkZone (E)		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
10:30	ChalkZone (E)		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
11:00	Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius	(8:48) Movie *** "Die Hard 2" (1990) Bruce Willis, Bonnie Bedelia. An L.A. cop battles terrorists in Washington.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
11:30	Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
12:00	Kim Possible "Downtown"		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
12:30	Kim Possible "Suave Nador"		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
13:00	Planet's Funniest Animals	Movie *** "Bring It On" (2000) Comedy Kaitlin Curran, Eliza Dushku, Jesse Bradford.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
13:30	Movie *** "U-571" (2000) James McMonaghey. Allied sailors hatch a dangerous plan to capture a Nazi sub.		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
14:00	Full House		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
14:30	Pokémon "Mars' first battle."		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
15:00	Yu-Gi-Oh!		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
16:00	Asahi! Real Monsters	Inside the Actors Studio	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
17:00	Rocket Power	Coming Attractions	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
18:00	SpongeBob SquarePants	Entertainment Tonight	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
18:30	Rugrats	Entertainment Tonight	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
19:00	How-Grinch Stole Christmas		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
19:30	Little Drummer Boy		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
20:00	Gilmore Girls "Nick & NoraGo" (2004)		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
20:30	Degrassi: Next	(3:58) Movie *** "Before Sunrise" (1995) Ethan Hawke, Julie Delpy. Two young travelers share a whirlwind romance in Vienna.	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
21:00	Degrassi: Next		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
21:30	Degrassi: Next		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
22:00	The Cosby Show		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
22:30	Home Improvement		Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
23:00	Touched by an Angel "Revealing Love"	Movie *** "Single White Female" (1992, Suspense)	Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot
23:30			Headline News	Headline News	Headline News		Emreli Live	My Life as a Teenage Robot

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TLC searching for vocal help

Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas and Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins are looking to collaborate with a new voice, but the TLC stars insist they're not trying to replace the late Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes.

"Nothing has changed. We're not replacing Lisa," Thomas said in a recent interview. "We're not looking for a new member."

Last month, the pair announced they were launching a search to find a vocalist to perform with them in concert and for one track on TLC's upcoming greatest hits project — a journey that will be the subject of a UPN reality show, "R U The Girl with T-Boz and Chilli."

Some fans were concerned that Thomas and Watkins were seeking to fill the shoes of Lopes, who died in a car crash in Honduras in 2002.

But the duo said then that they would never try to replace Lopes — perhaps the most dynamic member of the trio, with her colorful personality and energetic raps. Instead, they say they're simply looking for a fan to perform with them for a one-time performance and for the song on the greatest hits project.

Sandler not getting too serious

Although he shows more dramatic range than usual in "Spanglish," Adam Sandler isn't running away from comedies.

"I do love the movies I've done in the past," Sandler told reporters. "I work hard at my movies. But looking back at my career, when I end up having kids and I say, 'Throw in that 'Spanglish,' I know I'm going to be very proud of it."

In "Spanglish," Sandler plays the husband of Tea Leoni, whose Mexican housekeeper (Paz Vega) finds herself in a contest of wills with the neurotically overbearing Leoni.

Sandler has no illusions on whether his work in the comic drama is Oscar-worthy, although Jack Nicholson, Helen Hunt and Shirley Maclaine all received Academy Awards for movies directed by James L. Brooks, who also directed "Spanglish."

'Idol' had her doubts

Even though millions of people voted Fantasia Barrino as their "American Idol," the singer admits there was a time when she doubted America's fondness for her.

"Towards the end, I didn't think I was gonna win, when it was me and Diana [DeGarmo]," the 20-year-old said in a recent interview.

Some of that skepticism crept into her psyche after fellow contestants Jennifer Hudson and La Toya London got the boot. Public discussion centered on whether voters would pick another black singer as their champion. Even Elton John chimed in that their low-vote tallies were racist.

Any concerns about her universal appeal were squashed after she won the contest earlier this year with a 1.3 million vote edge over DeGarmo.

"Every nationality would come up to me and say 'I voted for you, I love you.' So I stopped thinking like that," she said.

Opera in the classroom

Dawn Upshaw, one of opera's great voices, is holding more than a master class — she's giving a master course. Upshaw has joined the faculty at Bard College Conservatory of Music, located in New York state's Hudson Valley. As the Charles Franklin Kellogg and Grace E. Ramsey Professor of the Arts and Humanities, she will be responsible for creating a program for the conservatory's vocal and vocal-dramatic programs.

"I am thrilled to have been invited to create a course of study for young singers at Bard," the soprano said in a statement. "My first experiences with new music were as an undergraduate student, and I think it is vitally important that singers and performers have the chance to create works together."

The conservatory is scheduled to open next fall, and the vocal programs are set to debut in the fall of 2006.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

An 'Idiot' is born

Demo theft leads Green Day to alter its musical approach, spawning the acclaimed 'American Idiot'

BY MARK BROWN

Scripps Howard News Service

The praise for Green Day's punk opera, "American Idiot," has been overwhelming and a bit insulting. The tone is: Who expected such a great album from these guys?

"Oh, yeah?" drummer Tre Cool says. "Well, they can just ..."

Let's call it a draw on all sides. The critics have been somewhat dismissive of Green Day — Cool, singer-guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong and bassist Mike Dirnt — since the band brought its punk/pop sound out from the Oakland, Calif., area with the 1994 breakthrough album "Dookie."

Green Day acknowledges that "American Idiot" — a political look at America that is by no means irrelevant now that the elections are over — is the most ambitious project it's ever undertaken, after falling into a bit of a lull.

"We threw the rules out the window. [Billie] said: 'Let's just have fun. If there's anything you wanna do, do it. If you feel like you've hit a wall, then change gears. Make a polka, do whatever. Make dirty Christmas songs.' It was pretty cool."

Tre Cool

turned a curve when Billie wrote "American Idiot," and we just kept on that," Cool says. "We threw the rules out the window. He said: 'Let's just have fun. If there's anything you wanna do, do it. If you feel like you've hit a wall, then change gears. Make a polka, do whatever. Make dirty Christmas songs.' It was pretty cool."

They began putting together bits and pieces of songs that eventually turned into the epic "Jesus of Suburbia," a song that the band acknowledges was hugely influenced by The Who's mini-opera "A Quick One (While He's Away)."

Armstrong began working out a complex story line revolving around a few characters, including St. Jimmy. (For a full interpretation, Cool suggests picking up the deluxe edition of "American Idiot" with the accompanying book; even he can't explain the story line.)

"The political aspect of the album just sets the climate of the story. There are three voices on the record — the political voice, the musical voice and the interpersonal struggles and choices the characters have to make," Cool says. "Even though people relate it to George Bush, it's just about the estab-

lish-

ment



Green Day members, from left, are Mike Dirnt, Billie Joe Armstrong and Tre Cool.

KRT



Watkins



Sandler



Barrino



BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG
AP

AP

Paddling moratorium

TX DALLAS — The Dallas school board has voted to implement a two-month moratorium on corporal punishment.

That will allow administrators to come up with a proposal which would still require board approval — to ban paddling and provide alternatives to discipline students.

Trustee Ron Price, who supports paddling, suggested the moratorium. It took the place of a recommendation to immediately ban paddling in the district.

"This gives our administration the opportunity to go back and study these issues ... and bring forth a legitimate plan," he said.

Man charged after crash

VT BURLINGTON — A Milton man who crashed a car at high speed and then wandered into a house and kissed a sleeping couple is facing a variety of charges.

Thomas Pople, 26, is hospitalized at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington. The charges he's facing are unlawful trespass, operating without owner's consent and careless and negligent operation. He had not been drinking, police said. Pople is due in court Jan. 24.

Pople was driving at more than 100 mph, said Vermont State Police Trooper Brian Perkins.

Pople lost control and crashed. The vehicle flipped at least twice. Pople banged his head, received a large gash, lost a tooth and cut his hand, Perkins said.

Then Pople walked a mile to the home of Sandra and Reginald Robinson. The couple woke when Pople greeted them as they slept, Sandra Robinson, 66, said.

"He kissed me on the cheek and said, 'Hi, Mom,'" she said. "Then he went around to the other side of the bed and kissed my husband and said, 'Hi, Dad.'"

Hearse driver not dead

MO KANSAS CITY — The dead driving the dead.

At least that's how the government seemed to have it in the case of Frank Jansky, a 75-year-old Kansas City man who drives a hearse part-time. Even as he lived and breathed, the Social Security Administration seemed to think he was no longer alive.

Jansky was traveling in England in September and October. He returned home in November to find his checking account mysteriously depleted and a letter from Medicare denying payment for diabetes treatment.

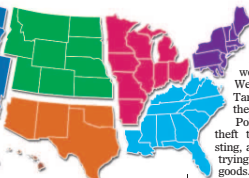
John Garlinger, a spokesman for Social Security, said the mix-up came from New York, where Jansky had lived for decades before moving to Kansas City in 1990.

A funeral home or family member apparently mistakenly reported Jansky's death. Garlinger said "it was funny," Jansky said. "But it wasn't funny."

Multicolored poinsettias

OR COBURG — Forget the red poinsettias. Now, you can even find the hails in purple, peach or even tie-dyed.

Oregon's largest producer of



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

poinsettias is offering the traditional Christmas plant in multiple colors.

The dye is permanent. It's a mixture of ethanol and special pigment that is actually beneficial to the plant, said Sherrie Lewis, who manages the annuals department of the Johnson Brothers Greenhouse.

The dyed plants cost about a dollar or two more than the nursery's selection of red, white and hybridized poinsettias, and so far sales have been pretty small.

"We must have sold at least 300 or so of the blue," Lewis said.

The dyed poinsettias have been popular for years in Europe, but have been slow to catch on in the United States.

Olympic medals stolen

FL FORT LAUDERDALE — A janitor was charged with stealing more than 100 Olympic medals and other memorabilia from the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

Paul Nichols Christow, 48, was charged with dealing in stolen property and grand theft over \$100,000. Police said he used his unfettered access to swipe the medals, valued at nearly \$500,000, from the museum's collection.

Christow's alleged scheme was discovered after the medals were



When cows fly...

A state patrol helicopter hauls a cow off an island in southwest Georgia's Lake Blackshear.

The cow became stranded on the uninhabited island when water levels dropped and is believed to have spent three to four weeks on the island.

sold to a collector over the Internet.

The collector contacted the Hall of Fame after acquiring medals won by Johnny Weissmuller, who played Tarzan in movies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Police said they traced the theft to Christow, set up a sting, and caught him on tape trying to sell more Olympic goods.

Memorabilia found

TX DALLAS — Authorities found a card bearing Jack Ruby's fingerprints, Bonnie and Clyde autopsy photos and other police-related memorabilia during a drug raid at an apartment.

Police said they found the memorabilia in Michael Roppolo's apartment in a raid on March 24, 2003. Roppolo was convicted of drug possession in November last year and received a five-year probationary sentence.

He told authorities that a relative who used to work for the department gave him the materials.

Police say items related to the assassination of John F. Kennedy appear to be authentic and apparently were taken from police archives several decades ago. They are to be included in a new police headquarters museum.

Sanctuary to close

CA PACIFIC GROVE — City Manager Ross Hubbard recommended closing a sanctuary for wintering monarch butterflies to allow removal of dangerous trees. A New York woman was killed last month when a dead pine fell on her as she strolled through the popular tourist destination. An arborist found many risky trees in the grove. The sanctuary will reopen in April.

Gymnastics bias lawsuit

WI STEVENS POINT — A male junior at Stevens Point Area Senior High has filed a court injunction against the state's high school sports association, seeking to compete on the girls' gymnastics team. Junior Keith Michael Bukowski claims he's being sexually discriminated. The school doesn't have a boys' gymnastics team. More than 300 students have signed a petition backing him.

Bleach assault

RI NEWPORT — A 68-year-old woman was in critical condition at Rhode Island Hospital after her niece allegedly attacked her with bleach.

Evangeline Henry, 44, of Middletown, was charged with felony assault for the attack on the woman. The victim, who was later determined to be Henry's aunt, was bleeding profusely from several head wounds.

She also was soaked in bleach, and suffered chemical burns over a large portion of her body. Woods said that the victim was intubated and unable to speak to the police.

Henry was also transported to the hospital, where she was also treated and released.

Henry appeared in District Court, where she posted \$2,000 surety bail.



Making rounds

With his three-legged pit bull in tow, Omnie Tienhaara, 5, plays cowboy while racing across his lawn in Kalispell, Mont.



Frozen feathers

A trumpeter swan's breath is visible in the cold air at the Akron Zoo in Ohio. There are several animal exhibits that are open year-round for patrons to view in the winter.



Big givers Bob Rickmers, left, carries two bags full of toys for delivery in Jersey City, N.J. Rickmers and his fellow employees collected more than \$1,000 worth of toys for UBS Investment Bank's "Toys for Tots" drive.



Sitting pretty Reflected in a mirror, Professional Cosmetology Institute student Lindsey Centari styles the hair of seventh-grade student Connie Schilling. More than 20 students from Hoyt Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa, visited the institute in Ames for haircuts and nail treatments as part of the Charity for Success program.



Learning new moves Stephanie Lum Yee and the rest of the advanced hula of the Ke Aloha Dance Company class learn a new dance in Anchorage, Alaska.



Sunset drive A motorcyclist drives through an intersection in Adelanto, Calif., as the sun sets.

Inauguration reports

NH CONCORD — Governor-elect John Lynch pledged that his inaugural committee would file annual public financial reports, which aren't legally required. The committee is a non-profit group responsible for planning Lynch's inauguration, inaugural balls and other formal activities. Lynch, who made ethics a campaign cornerstone, said no committee funds would be used to benefit him personally.

ID cards for theft victims

OH CLEVELAND — The state will begin issuing identification cards for identity theft victims to show police, banks and creditors while they recover. Attorney General Jim Petro says the program will help victims recoup losses more quickly and endure less scrutiny from authorities. Victims must report the theft and the authorities have to verify the crime before a card can be issued.

Tuition freeze proposed

NC CHAPEL HILL — The head of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors wants his colleagues to freeze tuition next year because he believes the state has enough money to provide a good education.

Chairman Brad Wilson made the point in a memo distributed to board members, state university chancellors and UNC system President Molly Broad. Fifteen of the state's 16 public universities increased tuition last year.

Parking meters arrest

PA PITTSBURGH — In the opening scene of the classic 1967 movie "Cool Hand Luke," Paul Newman's title character is arrested for cutting the heads off a row of parking meters.

So, when four city burglary detectives were assigned to find the person who stole at least 400 parking meters from city streets and lots over the past year, they didn't have to think long before giving the thief a name: "Operation Cool Hand Luke."

They arrested a man in the case. But unlike Newman's fictional character, whose motive was, "Small town, not much to do in the evening," the real-life meter suspect was after "scrap metal and the coins inside," police Detective Mike Pilysh said.

The suspect, Wade Harris, 39, who has an arrest record dating to 1983 primarily for thefts involving scrap metals, was charged with theft, receiving stolen property and criminal mischief.

Son arrested in burglary

VT BENNINGTON — A local teen has been charged with burglarizing his mother's second-hand clothing store as well as the gas station where he worked and a hair salon.

Casey A. Gras, 17, is also facing charges for allegedly selling cocaine. Police said he told them he committed the robberies to sup-

port his crack addiction, according to reports.

Gras could face up to 55 years in jail if he is convicted on all six counts. He pleaded innocent to the crimes in Bennington District Court.

Police allege that Gras burglarized Ellyz Hair Salon using a rock to smash the window and taking \$179 from the cash register.

On the same night, Gras allegedly broke into Second Time Around on River Street, which is owned by his mother. In that case, a cinder block was used and \$887 was reported stolen.

New university hospital

KY LEXINGTON — University of Kentucky HealthCare officials announced plans to build a new patient care facility on the campus that could cost an estimated \$375 million. University trustees unanimously approved the plan. It would be funded from existing revenues generated by the university's hospital and a \$250 million bond issue financed by UK HealthCare.

School recruiting cards

NE CRETE — A private college raised eyebrows with a recruiting postcard that shows a man surrounded by women and says students have the opportunity to "play the field."

Doane College sent the cartoon postcard to about 13,500 prospective students in California. Based on criticism it sparked, the college announced it was discontinuing the card.

"Doane College further expresses its regret if anyone associated with the college or potential applicants were in any way offended by the postcard's content," the college said in a statement.

One frame showed a student playing football for the Doane Tigers, with the caption: "Finally, a place where he could work toward the career of his choice. And also play the field."

Auto theft ring arrests

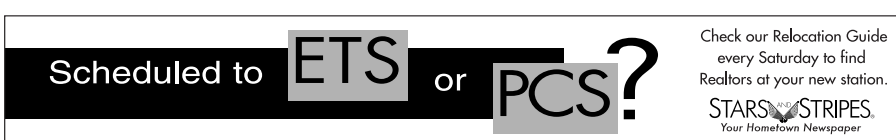
CA LAWRENCEVILLE — Authorities accused of being part of a large automobile theft ring that stole cars to unsuspecting Hispanics around the Southeast.

The group has been stealing cars from citizens and dealerships in the Miami and Atlanta areas, marking them with fake titles and then selling them around Georgia and the Carolinas to Hispanic customers who pay in cash, investigators said.

Once a police officer discovers the car is stolen, the car is impounded and the victims have no way to regain their money.

Authorities in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina have recovered about 26 stolen vehicles, mainly sport utility vehicles and trucks. And they know of about 50 vehicles registered in Georgia with counterfeit Florida titles, said Pete McFarlane of the Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety Auto Crime Unit.

Stories and photos from wire services



Horoscope

Happy birthday to the sun! The passage of our solar daddy into the Tropics of Cancer is one of the original reasons to party — ask any sophisticated caveman, Roman or ancient Egyptian. The days grow longer, the nights grow shorter, and we grow more aware that if we're to get that thing done before year's end, we'd better get busy.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(December 21). When you narrow your focus to one big goal, instead of being restricted, you feel your life broadening! Use what you're learning to up your income! Passionate encounters in the new year lead quickly to a commitment. Just be sure you're really ready! Friends have excellent tips in financial and romantic realms. Virgo and Pisces are love signs.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

You've hoped, wished and prayed — now, it's ultimatum time. A certain situation in your life simply can't go on as it was. Take a stand, and all of the correct elements will align to support you.

TAURUS (May 20-May 20)

You're fearless. Ferocious competition is out there, to be sure, but you're so convinced of your talent that nothing can stop you from winning. Tonight, you're in the mood to reconnect with friends you seldom call.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Your wild streak emerges to help you out in even the most sophisticated and structured environments. Release the constraints of artificial rules. Follow nature. Sagittarius helps in your pursuit of love.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Create more space in your life, and what you want might just drop into that opening. Peaceful environments help you come up with brilliant solutions or calm your nerves long enough to see the truth.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

Instead of complaining, you just fix it. Doing so earns you high character marks

in the eyes of someone who is known to promote those with outstanding qualities. It's nice to be generally well liked.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Obstacles can be overcome, not with force but with a different kind of strength. You're the sign of all things green. Think of the root that can crack concrete or the reeds that sway in the storm.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Pride goes before being broke. You've got nothing to prove, so put down the wallet. Someone who wants to pay your way shouldn't be battled — you deserve it. Taurus and Scorpio are particularly attractive to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

You see clearly what should be done, but the cooperation of many is required. Listen to friends. Do not, however, lend them money now unless you're sure you can afford to take a loss.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You'll have spurts of energy and dramatic peaks of joy. The power of your personality carries influence. Don't be enticed by extravaganza, which provides only a temporary high; find a permanent solution.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You've got the chance to paint a certain picture of your life in the mind of someone new. Count your blessings, and emphasize what you do not have. Tonight's mood is exceptionally romantic.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

There's no problem that can't be solved before it occurs — prevention is your motto. From car trouble to holiday planning to dealing with the in-laws, an ounce of prevention is worth well over \$100.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Your communication skills are superior. You could even pick up a few words in a new language. Seize the chance (or create your own opportunity) to make up for a wrong move in the past.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



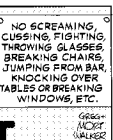
Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



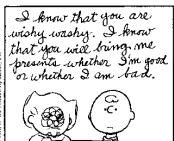
Red and Rover



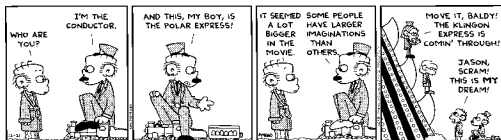
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



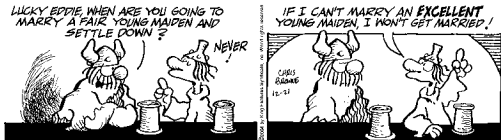
Blondie



Dilbert



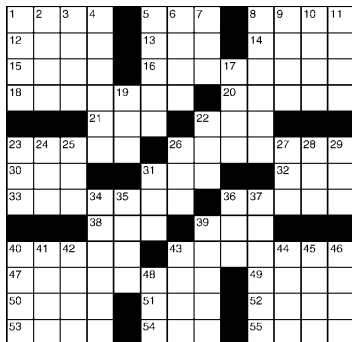
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Rollerblader's protection
- 5 A somebody
- 8 Furniture brand
- 12 Great Lake
- 13 Expert
- 14 Rent
- 15 Dermatology subject
- 16 Unlikely winner
- 18 Front-seat passenger's place
- 20 Cardiff people
- 21 Weeding need
- 22 Aviv precursor
- 23 Took off
- 26 Oater sound effects
- 30 Ostrich's kin
- 31 TV network
- 32 Hasty departure
- 33 Ansonist
- 36 Leaves at the altar
- 38 Seltzer or Seaver
- 40 Unoccupied
- 43 Goblin
- 47 Cabin rug, maybe
- 49 Busy with
- 50 — carotene
- 51 Adlai's opponent
- 52 Nitwit
- 53 Football

Down

- 1 Carrots' mates
- 2 St. Louis landmark
- 3 Pebbles' pet feeder
- 4 Boil
- 5 Worth
- 6 PC symbol
- 7 Corral
- 8 "... is fear —"
- 9 German ex-chancellor
- 10 Cupid's counterpart
- 11 Lit. collection
- 17 Verdon or Stefani
- 19 Pantheon figure
- 22 Monkey suit
- 23 Ump
- 24 "— Blue?"
- 25 Mean mutt
- 26 Throttle
- 27 Misfortune
- 28 Informer
- 29 North Sea
- 31 Tavern
- 34 Catch
- 35 Purchases
- 36 Trot
- 37 Drink
- 39 Fixed a flat?
- 40 Recedes
- 41 Encounter
- 42 Hors d'oeuvre spread
- 43 Armstrong's transport
- 44 Grandson of Eve
- 45 Teensy bit
- 46 Judge's raiment
- 48 Kipling hero

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-21

CRYPTOQUIP

D MIHQL JV H VDRI
BHQEIRGIQ CMJ EQJXLTV
WHDL "HTTJC AI GJ

DRGQJLXBI AU WMITV!"
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IN ANY CHEMIST'S
LABORATORY, YOU COULD PROBABLY SAY
THERE IS COMPOUND INTEREST.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals L

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'Tis the season for glut of games, points

Low-profile matchups often more entertaining than BCS counterparts

By RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

The bowl season has arrived and college football fans can expect two things: lots of games and lots of points.

Nineteen of the 28 bowl games will be played between Tuesday and New Year's Eve. Many of the matchups seem mundane, even odd.

Memphis against Bowling Green? Toledo vs. Connecticut? But don't be fooled. Often the pre-New Year's Day games are some of the most entertaining.

Check out some of these scores

Early bowl picks

from last year's second-tier bowl games: Hawaii 54, Houston 48; California 52, Virginia Tech 49; Miami (Ohio) 49, Louisville 28; Minnesota 31, Oregon 30.

There are a few potential shootouts this year, too — starting Wednesday with Memphis vs. Bowling Green in GMAC Bowl.

The Falcons are one of a record five Mid-American Conference teams in the postseason and rank fourth in the nation in scoring at 43.6 points per game. Memphis, making its second straight bowl appearance after a 32-year drought, averages over 35 points.

Bowling Green quarterback Omar Jacobs is one of the nation's least-publicized stars. He's the country's fourth-rated passer (167.8) and has thrown for 3,637 yards and 36 touchdowns.

Memphis counters with maybe the most underrated running back in the country in DeAngelo Williams. The junior is third in rushing with 166.2 yards per game.

The Hawaii Bowl on Friday could also be a fun one, with the hometown Warriors facing UAB.

Timmy Chang, who holds the NCAA career record for yards passing, and wide receiver Chad Owens, a second-team All-American, put up plenty of points and yards for Hawaii. And the Warriors defense usually allows the same.

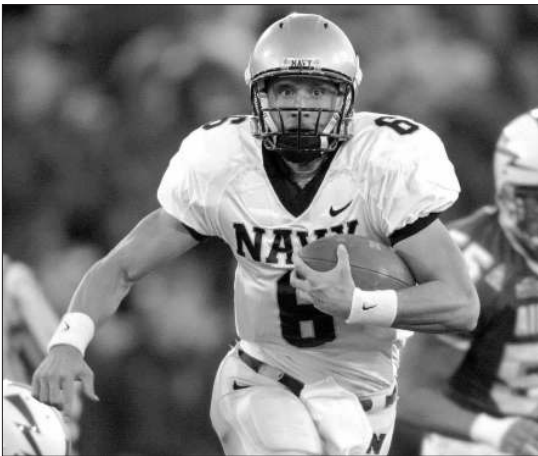
UAB's Darrell Hackney, a quarterback in the mold of the Minnesota Vikings' Daunte Culpepper, and dominant Roddy White, a third-team All-American, should make a good impression on NFL scouts.

Toledo and UConn in the Motor City Bowl on Dec. 27 features two more prolific passers in the Rockers' Bruce Gradkowski and the Huskies' Don Orlovsky. They have combined for 6,590 yards and 48 touchdowns passes.

"We sure don't want a shootout," UConn coach Randy Edsall said.

Texas Tech's Air Raid will try to keep up with a surly and very good California team in the Holiday Bowl, but for pure entertainment the Liberty Bowl could bring them all away.

No. 7 Louisville is the No. 1 in scoring, averaging 50.3 points per game. No. 10 Boise State ranks



Navy QB Aaron Polanco, who rushed for 844 yards and 13 TDs this season, will try to lead the Midshipmen to their first bowl victory since 1996 against New Mexico in the Emerald Bowl on Dec. 30 in San Francisco.

second in that stat, at 49.7 points per game.

Liberty Bowl officials weren't thrilled with losing Utah to the Bowl Championship Series, but got a great consolation prize in Boise State.

"It's such a unique matchup," Liberty Bowl executive director Steve Ehrhart said. "We're always having to battle the bowls that have beaches and fancy new stadiums. That's why, this time, we have a terrific opportunity to showcase Memphis."

The picks:

Tuesday, Dec. 21 Champs Sports Bowl

Georgia Tech (minus 4½) vs. Syracuse: No shootout here as Georgia Tech's tough defense ... **GEORGIA TECH 21-14.**

Wednesday, Dec. 22 GMAC Bowl

Memphis (plus 4½) vs. Bowling Green: Both teams looking for a second straight bowl victory ... **MEMPHIS 47-43.**

Thursday, Dec. 23 Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl

Cincinnati (minus 1½) vs. Marshall: Bearcats quarterback Gene Gaudin likely to return from injury ... **CINCINNATI 33-28.**

Las Vegas Bowl

Wyoming (plus 12) vs. UCLA: Cowboys' first bowl since 1993 ... **UCLA 41-17.**

Friday, Dec. 24 Hawaii Bowl

UAB (plus 3½) vs. Hawaii: War-

riors have scored 82 points in last two Hawaii Bowls ... **UAB 45-38.**

Monday, Dec. 27 MPC Computers Bowl

Fresno State (plus 5½) vs. No. 18 Virginia: Not what the Cavaliers were hoping for ... **VIRGINIA 36-16.**

Motor City Bowl

Toledo (minus 3½) vs. Connecticut: Huskies go bowling for first time ... **UConn 38-37.**

Tuesday, Dec. 28 Independence Bowl

Iowa State (plus 3) vs. Miami (Ohio): Cyclones are 1-6 in bowls ... **MIAMI 29-23.**

Insight Bowl

Oregon State (minus 3½) vs. Notre Dame: Irish try to snap six-bowl game losing skid ... **NOTRE DAME 22-17.**

Wednesday, Dec. 29 Houston Bowl

Texas-EI Paso (plus 3) vs. Colorado: Minors coach Mike Price 3-2 in bowl games ... **COLORADO 31-21.**

Alamo Bowl

No. 24 Ohio State (plus 1½) vs. Oklahoma State: Last time Buckeyes played in a bowl before Jan. 7 was 1993 ... **OHIO STATE 27-21.**

Thursday, Dec. 30 Continental Tire Bowl

No. 25 Boston College (plus 3) vs. North Carolina: BC gets taste of life in ACC ... **NORTH CAROLINA 27-21.**

Emerald Bowl

New Mexico (minus 2½) vs. Navy: Midshipmen's last bowl victory was in 1996 ... **NAVY 21-19.**

Holiday Bowl

No. 4 California (minus 11½) vs. Texas Tech: Beware angry Bears ... **CAL 48-14.**

Silicon Valley Classic

Troy (pick) vs. Northern Illinois: Troy's first bowl; Huskies' second ... **NORTHERN ILLINOIS 30-17.**

Friday, Dec. 31 Music City Bowl

Alabama (minus 3½) vs. Minnesota: Tide returns to postseason after two-year absence ... **ALABAMA 27-26.**

Sun Bowl

Purdue (minus 7) vs. No. 21 Arizona State: Sun Devils quarterback Andrew Walter is out with an injury ... **PURDUE 28-14.**

Liberty Bowl

No. 10 Boise State (plus 1½) vs. No. 7 Louisville: This should be more fun than Graceland ... **LOUISVILLE 56-40.**

Peach Bowl

No. 14 Miami (minus 2½) vs. No. 20 Florida: So, who exactly is coaching the Gators? ... **MIAMI 32-21.**

Last week of regular season: 5-2 (straight); 4-9 (y. points). Season: 194-52 (straight); 125-114-5 (y. points).

Bowl glance

Tuesday, Dec. 14	New Orleans Bowl	Payoff: \$750,000
Southern Mississippi 21, North Texas 10		
Tuesday, Dec. 21	Champs Sports Bowl	At Orlando, Fla.
Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Syracuse (6-5)	Payoff: \$850,000	
Wednesday, Dec. 22	GMAC Bowl	Mobile, Ala.
Payoff: \$750,000		
Memphis (8-3) vs. Bowling Green (8-3)	Thursday, Dec. 23	Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl
Payoff: \$750,000	Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5)	Las Vegas Bowl
Friday, Dec. 24	Hawaii Bowl	At Honolulu
Payoff: \$750,000	UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-5)	Monday, Dec. 27
At Boise, Idaho	MPC Computers Bowl	
Fresno State (8-3) vs. Virginia (8-3)	Motor City Bowl	At Detroit
Payoff: \$750,000	Toledo (9-3) vs. Connecticut (7-4)	Tuesday, Dec. 28
At Shreveport, La.	Payoff: \$1.2 million	Iowa State (6-5) vs. Miami (Ohio) (8-4)
At Phoenix	Payoff: \$750,000	Oregon State (6-5) vs. Notre Dame (6-5)
Wednesday, Dec. 29	Houston Bowl	
Payoff: \$1.1 million	Texas-EI Paso (8-3) vs. Colorado (7-5)	At San Antonio
Ohio State (7-4) vs. Oklahoma State (7-4)	Thursday, Dec. 30	Continental Tire Bowl
At Charlotte, N.C.	Payoff: \$750,000	Boston College (8-3) vs. North Carolina (6-5)
Payoff: \$750,000	Emerald Bowl	At San Francisco
New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (9-2)	Silicon Valley Classic	At San Jose, Calif.
Payoff: \$2 million	Troy (7-4) vs. Northern Illinois (8-3)	Friday, Dec. 31
At Nashville, Tenn.	Payoff: \$750,000	Alabama (6-5) vs. Minnesota (6-5)
At Dallas	Payoff: \$1.5 million	Purdue (7-4) vs. Arizona State (8-3)
At Memphis, Tenn.	Payoff: \$1.35 million	Boise State (11-0) vs. Louisville (10-1)
At Atlanta	Payoff: \$2.2 million	Miami (8-3) vs. Florida (8-3)
Monday, Jan. 1	Cotton Bowl	
Tennessee (9-3) vs. Texas A&M (7-4)	Outback Bowl	At Tampa, Fla.
Payoff: \$2.75 million	Wisconsin (12-0) vs. Georgia (9-2)	Gator Bowl
At Nashville, Fla.	Payoff: \$1.6 million	Florida State (8-3) vs. West Virginia (8-3)
At Orlando, Fla.	Payoff: \$5,187 million	Iowa (9-2) vs. LSU (9-2)
At Pasadena, Calif.	Payoff: \$14.5 million	Michigan (12-0) vs. Texas (12-0)
At Tempe, Ariz.	Payoff: \$11-14 million	Utah (11-0) vs. Pittsburgh (8-3)
At New Orleans	Payoff: \$11-14 million	Auburn (12-0) vs. Virginia Tech (10-2)
At Miami	Payoff: \$11.4 million	Southern Cal (12-0) vs. Oklahoma (12-0)

Former champ Spadafora pleads guilty

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Former IBF lightweight boxing champion Paul Spadafora pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and a weapons charge on Monday for shooting his girlfriend last year.

Prosecutors dropped charges of attempted homicide and reckless endangerment.

Spadafora was charged with shooting Nadine Russo in the abdomen on Oct. 26, 2003, because he was upset she had flattened two tires on his sport utility vehicle. The couple has since become engaged, and Russo did not comment when leaving court on Monday.

The two counts to which Spadafora pleaded guilty are felonies.

Aggravated assault carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years, while the weapons charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years.

Spadafora's attorney said he expected a sentence of no more than two years, not counting time served. A sentencing date will be set following a pre-sentencing hearing.

The troubled fighter was jailed earlier this month after a urine test revealed he had been using cocaine, a violation of his bond.

Sports briefs

Shortly before his fiancée was shot, he was arrested for urinating on a Pittsburgh street while intoxicated and was later convicted of disorderly conduct and public intoxication.

Spadafora is a former International Boxing Federation light-weight champion. He gave up his IBF title in 2003 and said he was moving up to junior welterweight, where he could maintain his weight.

Lab charged with destroying cyclist Hamilton's sample

ATHENS, Greece — An Olympic doping laboratory was charged Monday with destroying a sample that belonged to gold medalist cyclist Tyler Hamilton.

Prosecutors charged "unknown perpetrators" with destroying a backup sample of the U.S. rider's blood.

After winning his event at the Athens Games, Hamilton took a doping test, and an initial sample and backup sample were kept by the lab. A test of the initial sample showed evidence of a blood transfusion, but the case against Hamilton was dropped after his backup sample was frozen, leav-

ing too few red blood cells to analyze.

Hamilton tested positive again at a September race, with both samples confirming the result. He has questioned the reliability of the testing system for blood doping, which boosts endurance by raising the level of oxygen-carrying red blood cells.

Prosecutors also charged Greek weightlifter Leonidas Sampanis with taking banned substances during the Olympics. Sampanis was stripped of his bronze medal in the 137-pound category after a drug test showed an abnormally high level of testosterone. He faces a single misdemeanor charge.

The prosecutors are Spyros Moutzakitis and Athena Theodoropoulou, who are involved in a number of doping cases related to the Athens Olympics. Among them is the case against Greek sprinters Kostas Kentaris and Katerina Thanou. The two were charged last month with avoiding a drug test and faking a motorcycle accident hours later.

On Friday, Kentaris and Thanou submitted written explanations to the International Association of Athletics Federations on why they missed drug tests on the eve of the Olympics. The IAAF said it would decide by the end of the month whether the explanations were acceptable.

Delucci, Rangers reach \$1.8M deal

The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Outfielder David Delucci agreed to terms on a two-year, \$1.8 million contract with the Texas Rangers on Sunday.

The deal, which includes up to \$700,000 in performance bonuses, is contingent on Delucci passing a physical.

Delucci batted .251 with 17 homer and 61 RBIs in 107 games with the Rangers last season. He batted .251 with 44 homers and 224 RBIs in 648 games over eight seasons with Baltimore, Arizona, the New York Yankees and Texas.

Alou not injured in car mishap

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Free-agent outfielder Moises Alou escaped injury when his car hit a pothole and momentarily spun out of control.

Alou was driving alone Saturday night in Santo Domingo, where he lives in the offseason. "I'm grateful that everything worries about me, but thank God I'm OK," he told The Associated Press on Sunday. "Two of the tires blew out and I had to call for help to tow it. There was not a crash or any injuries."

Alou hit 39 home runs with 106 RBIs last season with the Chicago Cubs. The Mets made Alou an offer about two weeks ago, general manager Omar Minaya told the AP on Friday after a news conference announcing a \$53 million, four-year deal with Dominican pitcher Pedro Martinez.

The left fielder has spent 13 seasons in the major leagues with five teams. He has batted .300 with 278 home runs and 1,092 RBIs with Pittsburgh, Montreal, Florida, Houston and the Cubs, winning a World Series ring with the Marlins in 1997.

The Cubs declined an \$11.5 million mutual option on Alou, and the decision to not bring him back was hardly a surprise. Although Alou topped 100 RBIs for the fifth time and said he wanted to return to Chicago, the Cubs were looking for a younger and cheaper player as they remake their roster after a late-season collapse that cost them a playoff spot.

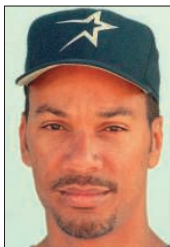
He hit .283 with 76 home runs and 258 RBIs in three seasons with the Cubs.

"To go somewhere else is going to be tough," Alou said at the end of the season.

Polanco, Villone accept arbitration

Second baseman Placido Polanco accepted the Philadelphia Phillies' offer of salary arbitration on Sunday night, and left-hander Tony Villone agreed to arbitrate with the Seattle Mariners.

Just three of the 41 free agents offered arbitration by their former teams on Dec. 7 accepted the offers. Roger Clemens announced last weekend at the winter meetings that he was taking



Free agent outfielder Moises Alou escaped injury when his car hit a pothole and momentarily spun out of control in Santo Domingo.

Houston's offer — but the seven-time Cy Young Award winner also said he still had not decided whether he would pitch in 2005 or retire.

Players who accept arbitration are considered to have re-signed with their former teams and no longer are free agents.

Players who accept arbitration are considered to have re-signed with their former teams and no longer are free agents. Catcher Jason Varitek, shortstop Orlando Cabrera and pitcher Derek Lowe rejected arbitration offers from Boston, and pitcher Orlando Hernandez and designated hitter Ruben Sierra rejected offers from the New York Yankees. Center fielder Carlos Beltran turned down the arbitration offer made by Houston.

Polanco hit .298 for the Phillies last season with 17 homers and 55 RBIs. Villone was 8-6 with a 4.08 ERA in 10 starts and 46 relief appearances with the Mariners last season.

Baseball has another deadline Monday: It's the last day for teams to offer 2005 contracts to unsigned players on their 40-man rosters. Players not offered contracts become free agents.

Eischen, Nationals reach deal

WASHINGTON — Left-handed reliever Joey Eischen agreed Monday to a one-year, \$1.04 million deal with Major League Baseball's new Washington team.

Eischen is the only one of seven former Montreal Expos players eligible for arbitration expected to re-sign with the team by Monday's deadline.

Interim general manager Jim Bowden was deciding whether to tender offers to the other six: outfielder Brad Wilkerson, catcher Brian Schneider, first baseman Nick Johnson and pitchers Tony Armas Jr., Tomo Ohka and T.J. Tucker.

The Expos will become the Nationals if their move from Montreal to Washington overcomes a financial impasse between the league and the District of Columbia Council.

Eischen made only 21 appearances last season because of elbow injuries. He went 0-1 with a 3.93 ERA in 18 1/3 innings.

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McCown keeps Cardinals' playoff hopes alive

BY BOB BAUM

The Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Josh McCown might be the quarterback Dennis Green thought he was after all.

Two starts after returning from a three-game benching, McCown put together the best performance of his young career in the Arizona Cardinals' 31-7 rout of the St. Louis Rams on Sunday.

From virtually the day he was hired, Green called McCown his choice as quarterback, but set him down after nine games.

"Josh McCown played very well," Green said, perhaps the first time he has spoken those words this season.

McCown completed 22 of 34 passes for 287 yards with no interceptions. He threw two touchdown passes to Larry Fitzgerald, and ran for two scores.

McCown said that he learned from watching on the sideline after nine games as a starter.

"You're watching with a different pair of eyes," he said. "You're seeing things differently when you are a rookie or a guy that hasn't played very much. Don't get me wrong, I didn't like it, but I tried to make it a positive experience."

The Cardinals, at 5-9, are still in the

NFC West race is a testament to just how bad the division is.

A victory would have moved the Rams into a tie with Seattle atop the division, since St. Louis holds the tiebreaker with two wins over the Seahawks. Instead, the Rams fell to 6-8, just one game ahead of the Cardinals.

"We didn't see this coming," Rams wide receiver Torrey Holt said. "If there was any game on the schedule that we felt confident about coming in and winning, it would be Arizona."

If Arizona wins its last two, and both Seattle and St. Louis go 0-2, the Cardinals would take the division title at 7-9.

"I'm surprised that a 5-9 team is in it, but I'm not surprised that it's this team," McCown said. "We have it in us. We have the talent, we have the capability to do this, it's just a consistency thing."

With quarterback Marc Bulger out from a shoulder injury, 39-year-old Chris Chandler lasted just one quarter for the Rams before he was replaced by Jamie Martin, who saw his first regular-season action in two years. He was signed by the Rams earlier this month when Bulger was injured.

"It was almost surreal," Martin said, "being on the couch two weeks ago watching the game and now I'm playing in it. But as things went on, guys helped me calm down and I think we did some decent things."

St. Louis coach Mike Martz put much of the blame on Chandler, saying the veteran quarterback threw the ball on a run play on the first series and made other elementary mistakes.

The Rams had minus-20 yards of offense in the first quarter.

Chandler, who had six passes intercepted last week, was 1-for-6 for 1 yard with an interception. He was sacked twice.

"It's tragic for this football team, for that position to hold this whole football team hostage," Martz said, "but that's where we are."

The benching came after Chandler threw six interceptions a week earlier in a loss at Carolina. Why has Chandler played so poorly?

"Guys, I just can't answer that," Martz said. "I don't know. I'm just baffled by it."

Chandler left without speaking to reporters.

The Rams' touchdown came on Leonard Little's 61-yard fumble return with 7 seconds left in the first half.

"I thought, 'Well, this might spark the team and we might get things going,' but it never did happen," Little said. "I guess that was a useless play, really."

St. Louis' only serious offensive threat ended when Holt was hit by Ifeanyi Ohalet and fumbled as he was about to cross



Arizona Cardinals' Josh McCown (12) scores a touchdown on a quarterback keeper during the first quarter Sunday.

the goal line. Ohalet recovered in the end zone for a touchback.

As Fitzgerald put it, the Cardinals "kept our foot on the pedal" the whole game, never turning conservative.

Lions fumble away chance to knock off Vikings

The Associated Press

DETROIT — When Minnesota quarterback Daunte Culpepper watched Detroit line up for a third extra point, he remembered that the snapper had struggled earlier.

"I was just hoping something like that would happen," Culpepper said.

It did. Matt Mulbach's snap bounced to holder Nick Harris, leading to a botched extra point with 8 seconds left that allowed the Vikings to beat the Lions 28-27 on Sunday.

"It must have slipped out," Mulbach said. "I let down 52 people who played their hearts out."

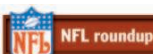
The Vikings (8-6) took a big step toward their first playoff berth in four years. Despite losing five of its previous seven games, Minnesota can win the NFC North with a victory Friday at home over Green Bay and a week later at Washington. In the awful NFC, Minnesota could even be a wild-card team without winning another game.

Culpepper, who was 25-for-35 for 404 yards, threw three TD passes and an interception. Moe Williams scored the go-ahead TD on an 11-yard run with 1:37 left.

The Lions then went 80 yards to pull within one point on Joey Harrington's second touchdown pass to Roy Williams. But after Detroit's costly miscue, Randy Moss recovered the onside kick to seal the win.

The Lions (5-9) likely fell out of the postseason race with their seventh loss in eight games.

"It is a pretty emotional locker room," Detroit coach Steve Mariucci said. "And in the big picture, that's a good thing."



Nate Burleson, who had five receptions for 134 yards, caught a career-high two TDs passes.

Moss and Culpepper hooked up for the longest play of their careers, an 82-yarder for a score, and Moss finished with four catches for 102 yards. He caught his 88th TD pass, tying Hall of Famer Don Maynard for eighth on the NFL's career list, and had his 41st 100-yard game, surpassing Chris Carter's team record.

Moss declined comment after the game.

Kevin Jones was held to 79 yards and 150 yards after running for more than 150 yards the previous two games.

Both Harrington and Jones played with the flu, and the much-maligned quarterback felt even worse when Detroit blew a chance to force overtime.

"I wasn't even watching," Harrington said. "I was walking back to the bench, and I heard a groan and looked up at the Jumbotron."

Jets 37, Seahawks 14: At East Rutherford, N.J., the Jets vented their frustration all week about their scoring woes.

LaMont Jordan stewed over here, and Santana Moss over there.

Then Sunday, they took their anger out on the Seattle Seahawks, with Chad Pennington throwing three touchdown passes and Curtis Martin running for two scores.

The victory kept the Jets (10-4) ahead in the AFC wild-card race while giving them a much-needed confidence boost going into

next week's game against division rival New England.

Bills 33, Bengals 17: At Cincinnati, Takeo Spikes returned an interception 62 yards for a pivotal touchdown against his former team, and Buffalo turned in another dominating defensive performance.

Buffalo (8-6) bolstered its playoff chances with a solid all-around game. Jason Peters blocked a punt and recovered in the end zone for a score, and the defense turned Jon Kitna's latest comeback into a bad flashback.

Kitna, filling in for the injured Carson Palmer, threw two interceptions and fumbled a snap, dooming the Bengals (6-8) to their 14th consecutive season

without a winning record — one of the longest streaks of futility in NFL history.

Spikes' second touchdown of the season put the Bills up 21-7 and on their way to a fifth straight victory. Since opening 0-4, Buffalo has won eight of 10 to climb into contention for a wild-card berth.

The Bills have scored at least 33 points while winning each of their last five games, their best streak since 1998.

Texans 24, Bears 5: Houston allowed the fewest points in its three-year history and got four turnovers to beat the bumbling Bears.

With the temperature 9 degrees at kickoff and the wind chill

10 below zero, it was the Texans (6-8) who handed Soldier Field's rigid conditions better than the Bears.

David Carr threw a TD pass to Corey Bradford and also set up a field goal with a 69-yard toss to Jabar Gaffney. Dominick Davis scored on an 11-yard run in the fourth quarter and Charlie Anderson capped the victory by returning a fumble 60 yards for a TD with 2:37 left.

Carr was 13-for-28 for 220.

The Bears (5-9) failed to score a touchdown for the second straight game and their bunched-up fans booed at another inept performance by the NFL's worst offense.

Chad Hutchinson, under a heavy rush all day, finished 17-for-34 for 168 yards.

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Victory overshadowed Owens' ankle injury

First MRI inconclusive and more tests planned; Reid expects star receiver will sit next Monday

BY DAN GELSTON
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Terrell Owens brought a lot of fun, big plays and controversy in his first season in Philadelphia.

With an ankle injury, he also has added some uncertainty.

The star receiver could miss at least one game after spraining his right ankle in the Eagles' 12-7 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday that gave Philadelphia home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

"There's a pretty good chance he won't be out there," coach Andy Reid said. "The positive is, it's not broken. The negative is, it did swell up. There's a pretty good chance he won't be there for sure this week. We'll see about the following week."

Owens was hurt early in the third quarter when he was dragged down from behind by Roy Williams on a 20-yard reception. Owens immediately grabbed the back of his leg, but left the field on his own power.

Owens, who has 77 catches for 1,196 yards and a team-record 14 touchdowns, hobbled around on the sideline, then needed help to make it into the locker room. X-rays on the ankle were negative, and an MRI on Monday was inconclusive. More tests were scheduled.

The Eagles play next Monday night at St. Louis and finish the season on Jan. 2 at home against Cincinnati. Philadelphia will open the playoffs Jan. 15 or 16.

"No doubt in my mind. He will be back," quarterback Donovan McNabb said.

Other than the injury, it was business as usual for the Eagles.

The Eagles (13-1) set a franchise record for

regular-season victories. They've finished first in the conference three straight years, but couldn't take advantage of playing at home in the last two NFC championship games, losing to Tampa Bay and Carolina. The Eagles also lost in the NFC title game in 2002, at St. Louis.

The Eagles also won all six games this year against NFC East teams, sweeping New York, Washington and Dallas for the first time in team history.

"I'm a little bit of a historian about the league and any time you can sweep the division — especially the NFC East — I think it speaks highly of the way the ballclub is put together," linebacker Ike Reese said.

McNabb threw for 223 yards and one TD with two interceptions and used his legs to help the Eagles score on their winning drive. After Dallas' Billy Cundiff missed a 46-yard field goal with 6:03 left, the Eagles got the ball at their 36 and McNabb took over. He completed a 13-yard pass to L.J. Smith and ran for 12 and 19 yards — his first carries of the game.

On third-and-9 from the Cowboy 19, McNabb threw 11 yards to Brian Westbrook. Dorey Levens ran 6 yards on the next play, setting up his 2-yard touchdown run for a 12-7 lead.

"I just took it upon myself to pick up yards when I can," McNabb said. "A lot of guys came up to me during that drive and said, 'Do what you do.'"

On third-and-10, Testaverde also had two passes intercepted, one by Lito Sheppard on the Cowboys' final possession. Keyshawn Johnson had a TD catch for Dallas (5-9).

"We'll see if we can't come back and try to finish a little stronger," Cowboys coach Bill Parcells said.



Dallas' Terrence Newman (41) breaks up a pass intended for Philadelphia's Terrell Owens (81) during the first quarter of Sunday's game.

The Eagles beat the Cowboys 49-21 in a Monday night game last month. But Dallas kept this one close.

The Cowboys started their only scoring drive at Philadelphia's 23 in the second quarter and Testaverde finished it, connecting with Johnson for a 7-yard TD for a 7-0 lead. McNabb found Clay Lewis in the corner of the end zone for a 2-yard TD pass that made it 6-0 in the second quarter. David Akers' extra point was blocked by Kurt Vullers, ending Akers' club-record string of 153 successful conversions.

Go-for-broke Saints stay in playoff hunt

BY FRED GOODALL
The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — With their hopes of staying in playoff contention on the line, the New Orleans Saints wanted no part of overtime.

"It was all touchdown, no field goal," Dante Stallworth said after catching a last-minute, 7-yard TD pass from Aaron Brooks to beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 21-17 on Sunday and keep alive the Saints' postseason prospects.

"We've got a ways to go," coach Jim Haslett said. "But it was a great team effort from the standpoint we hung in there."

Brooks threw two touchdown passes in the last four minutes, including the decisive one with 32 seconds left, as the Saints (6-8) came from behind to win on the road for the second time this week.

The victory lifted them into a tie with Carolina and St. Louis for the last wild-card spot in the weak NFC with two games to go.

The Saints face NFC South champion Atlanta at home next Sunday before finishing the regular season at Carolina.

Two weeks ago, New Orleans

was on a three-game losing streak that fueled speculation about Haslett's job security. After overcoming 10-point deficits to beat Dallas and the Bucs, there's suddenly hope for what mostly has been a disappointing year.

"We've still got life," punt returner Michael Lewis said. "Just like coach said, it was going to come down to the fourth quarter. We just had to stand there and keep plugging away."

The Bucs (5-9) also entered the weekend as one of many teams in playoff contention, despite being three games under .500. Losing made them the first team to lose a Super Bowl victory with losing records the next two seasons.

"The fact is, we're just not good enough to get it done," Bucs cornerback Ronde Barber said.

"The guys played hard. That's not the issue. We played bad, that's the issue, and we do it to every week. We're about as under-serving a team as there is. You can put smoke and mirrors around it all you want. This team just finds ways to lose, man."

Lewis returned a punt 53 yards to the Tampa Bay 4 to set up Brooks' 4-yard TD pass to Joe

Horn that trimmed a 10-point deficit to 17-14 with 3:33 to go. After John Carney's kickoff sailed out of bounds, giving the Bucs the ball at their 40, defensive end Will Smith forced Michael Pittman's fumble on first down and the Saints' Fakhr Brown recovered at the 41.

Eight plays later, Brooks threw to Stallworth, who squeezed between Barber and Dexter Jackson to set up into the end zone.

"It was a great throw, a perfect throw. I just had to catch it," Stallworth said.

The quick turnaround ruined an outstanding performance by Tampa Bay's Joey Galloway, who scored on a 3-yard reception and 59-yard punt return to build a 14-7 lead. Jay Taylor's field goal made it 17-7 with just over 11 minutes to go.

Penalties, turnovers and mental mistakes have undermined the Saints all season, and nearly did them in again.

Carney missed a 38-yard field goal, and another scoring opportunity was wasted when Jerome Patton fumbled after a 15-yard reception to the Bucs' 3.

Brooks, who scrambled for 13 yards on fourth-and-12 from the

Tampa Bay 43 to keep the winning drive alive, finished 14-of-21 for 169 yards. He threw no interceptions, but was sacked seven times, with Simeon Rice getting 3 1/2 of the takedowns.

"It was just a situation where we make that play or we go home with a loss," Brooks said of the fourth-down run.

On the opening kickoff, the Saints' Aaron Stecker slipped and let the ball roll through his legs — but then picked it up and ran 98 yards for a touchdown.

Brian Griese completed 13 of 22 passes for 118 yards for Tampa Bay, which lost two fumbles in addition to an end-zone interception.

The Saints were limited to 64 yards in the opening half, yet went into the locker room tied 7-7 thanks to Stecker, who played four seasons in Tampa before signing with New Orleans as a free agent last winter.

"I looked up and all I could see was a sea of red. My instincts took over," said Stecker, who was taken to the locker room after his TD.

"They said I hyperventilated," he explained. "I had never been so excited before the game. It all got to me."

Hungry QBs Colins and Volek carve up records

By GREG BEACHAM
The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Both defensive secondaries were riddled with injuries. Both quarterbacks were hungry to prove they're as good as the recent MVPs they backed up earlier in the year.

So, not too surprisingly, the Oakland Raiders' 40-35 victory over the Tennessee Titans on Sunday was a showcase for Kerry Collins and Billy Volek, with records falling nearly as frequently as the befuddled defensive backs.

Collins passed for a season-high 371 yards and threw a career-best five touchdown passes, three to Jerry Porter. Volek merely had the second-best day in franchise history, going 40-for-60 for 492 yards and four touchdowns and rushing for a TD.

When the scoring drives finally abated and Oakland hung on with a late safety, Tennessee linebacker Keith Bullock voiced the theme and frustration in scoring the Raiders' defense after two former backup quarterbacks carved them up.

"A lot of our teammates are out," Bullock said. "The guys that are in there are playing, but the game is just moving too fast for them. Our offense is scoring 30-plus (points), and we can't even stop the sink from running. It's very frustrating."

Meervy Bennett, Volek's close friend, said he's especially beneficiary of Volek's prolific day with a franchise-record 13 receptions for 160 yards and two TDs. Porter was no less impressive, with career highs of eight catches and 148 yards.

Tennessee's Derrick Mason caught the game's ninth touchdown pass on the first play of the fourth quarter. The clubs combined for 942 yards and countless big plays, including six scoring passes on at least 17 yards.

"It was rough out there for a while," Oakland cornerback Nnamdi Asomugha said. "I wasn't sure we were going to win until we started shaking hands after the game."

Oakland's special teams and defense finally came through. Trailailing 35-28, the Titans faced a field goal with 5:53 left, but holder Craig Henrichs's pass to Shad Meier was incomplete between two defenders at the goal line.

After Oakland added a field goal and Volek scored on a 1-yard drive, the Titans' last play was called for intentional grounding in the end zone with 8 seconds left, resulting in a safety.

"We're going to let the ball down the field," Volek said. "The wide receivers are doing a great job. The offensive line was doing a great job. We just didn't score enough points."

Oakland (5-9) snapped a four-game home losing streak with a resurgent effort by a once-sundered offense, while the Titans (4-10) lost their fourth straight.

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Packers lose to Jags but aren't left out in the cold

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

GREEN BAY, Wis. — As expected, the icy weather was a breeze for one team and a 3½-hour ordeal for the other.

Only, it was the warm-weather Jacksonville Jaguars who looked right at home Sunday in their 28-25 victory over the stunned Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field, where the temperature was in the single digits and the wind chill well below zero.

Jimmy Smith caught two touchdowns passes from Byron Leftwich, Fred Taylor rushed for 165 yards and a score, and Rashean Mathis picked off Brett Favre twice, helping the Jaguars (8-6) stay in the thick of the AFC playoff race.

Jaguars coach Jack Del Rio said there was no way to prepare his team physically for the chill, but "we were ready for the cold mentally, and we did not let the elements dictate how we played."

The Packers did, turning the ball over four times inside the Jacksonville 23 and missing a field goal after reaching the 13.

Nevertheless, the Packers (8-6) became the ninth team in NFL history to reach the playoffs after a 1-4 start. They clinched before kickoff because Chicago, Dallas, Carolina and New York all lost in the run-of-the-week NFC.

"I'll take your word for it," Packers tackle Mark Tauscher said.

The Packers fell into a tie with Minnesota atop the NFC North after the Vikings edged Detroit 28-27 Sunday. They travel to Minneapolis for a Christmas Eve matinee that will decide the division. "We want to earn it," Packers guard Mike Wahl said. "We don't feel like we earned it right now. So we're going to go out there and try to earn it next week."

But what was mostly on the Packers' minds was their fallen teammate, wide receiver Robert Ferguson, who spent the night at Belton Hospital after feeling faint in his legs temporarily when Jaguars safety Donovan Darius clotheslined him in the closing minutes.

Ferguson suffered a sprained neck, and team trainer Pepper Burruss said Ferguson had move-



Jaguars receiver Jimmy Smith, left, gets behind Packers cornerback Al Harris for a 31-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter.

ment and sensation in his arms and legs Sunday night.

In a scene right out of the leather-helmet days of the NFL, more than a half-century ago, Darius swept in after Ferguson's 31-yard grab of Favre's pass at midfield and put a vicious, helmet-stripping hit that knocked him unconscious. Darius was ejected.

"My main concern from that point on, really up until the game was over, I wanted to win but I was concerned for Pergie," Favre said.

Darius defended his hit.

"I wasn't in the position to make an interception and there wasn't a way for me to get my hand in there to disrupt the pass. My natural tendency was to swing in an upward motion and try to dislodge the ball," he said.

Darius said he would appeal any fine the league hands down.

Favre turned over the ball four times and fell to 31-4 at home after Dec. 1, losing for the second time in 40 cold-weather games at home.

Still, the Packers had a shot at a comeback when Favre hit Antonio Chatman with a 6-yard touchdown throw and found Donald Driver for the 2-point conversion to pull Green Bay to 28-25 with 1:08 left.

But Jacksonville safety Nick Soenksen recovered the onside kick, wresting the ball from Packers tight end Ben Steele.

Smith had TD catches of 31 and 16 yards with Al Harris in coverage.

"As a kid, I always saw the highlights from the Ice Bowl and always dreamed of coming up to the frozen tundra and playing under conditions like this," Smith said. "It was tough. I'm still thawing out."



Colts wide receiver Marvin Harrison (88) celebrates his 29-yard touchdown catch with Rick DeMulling (64), Jim Saturday and Tarik Glenn (78).

Record: Ravens stifled Colts offense, still lost

RECORD, FROM BACK PAGE

The Ravens (8-6) were busy dealing with other matters — like their playoff hopes. The loss dropped them into a tie with Buffalo, Jacksonville and Denver, and they managed to hold the Colts to their lowest scoring total of the season.

But the Ravens also wanted to prevent Manning from making history against their defense.

"All we've seen on TV this week was Peyton Manning this and Peyton Manning that," cornerback Gary Baxter said. "We weren't going to let him set the record against us."

The Ravens stifled Manning by using extra defensive backs and constant shifts, then controlled the clock by running the ball as long as it could.

It worked — for a while. When Manning returned after a sluggish first half, it didn't take him long to get the Colts going.

He opened the third period with a 77-yard scoring drive that ended with a 29-yard TD pass to a wide-open Marvin Harrison, who burned Chris McAlister with a nifty outside fake before turning inside. That gave the Colts a 13-3 lead.

Manning also got some help from his teammates.

Mike Vanderjag kicked two first-half field goals to give Indianapolis a 6-3 lead in its second-lowest scoring opening half of the season. Larry Triplett blocked a field goal that set up the

Colts' second touchdown drive — a 10-point swing that changed the game.

Baltimore never recovered after Von Hutchinson returned the blocked kick to the Baltimore 31. Five plays later, Edgerrin James scored on a 3-yard run to make it 20-3 as fans urged Manning to throw the ball.

"Their safeties were eyeing Reggie (Wayne) and (Brandon) Stokley on the outside," Manning said. "It was a no-brainer."

The Ravens responded on their next series. A 64-yard kickoff return by B.J. Sams set up a 36-yard field goal. When the Colts were called for offside, the Ravens accepted the penalty and Kyle Boller threw a 13-yard TD pass to Todd Heap. Boller was 19 of 40 for 210 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions.

"Those are things you wouldn't do at home," Baltimore coach Brian Billick said. "But that's an explosive offense to keep suppressed."

Indianapolis sealed the win when Cato June picked off Boller's pass and ran it 71 yards to the Baltimore 4, giving Manning one more chance to tie the record. Fans gave Manning a standing ovation when he came back onto the field, hoping he would throw.

Instead he knelt down and didn't give the record a second thought.

"If it happens during the course of the game, that's the way it's meant to be," he said. "It was just good to get the win."

Sunday's NFL stars:

Quarterbacks

■ Drew Bledsoe, Bills, moved ahead of Joe Montana into seventh place on the career completions list with 3,412. He went 15-for-30 for 183 yards in a win over Cincinnati.

■ Billy Volek, Titans, had the second-best passing day in franchise history with 492 yards and threw for four touchdowns against Oakland.

■ Daunte Culpepper, Vikings, went 25-for-35 for 426 yards and threw three TD passes against Detroit.

■ Joey Harrington, Lions, was 26-for-44 for a career-high 361 yards with two TDs and two interceptions against Minnesota.

■ Kerry Collins, Raiders, threw for 371 yards against Tennessee and matched his career high with five TD passes.

■ Trent Green, Chiefs, completed 10 of 19 passes for 224 yards and three touchdowns in a win over the Broncos.



AP photos

Receivers

■ Antonio Gates, Chargers, tied an NFL record for tight ends with his 12th TD of the season.

■ Drew Bennett, Titans, established a career high with 13 receptions, tying the franchise record for catches. He had 166 yards in receptions against the Raiders.

■ Jerry Porter, Raiders, caught scoring passes of 32, 18 and 3 yards, and had eight catches for 148 yards in a win against the Titans.

■ Randy Moss, Vikings, caught an 84-yard TD pass against Detroit. He had four catches for 103 yards.

■ Nate Burleson, Vikings, who had five receptions for 134 yards, caught a career-high two TDs.

■ John Fitzgerald, Cardinals, had TD receptions of 8 and 4 yards against the Rams.

■ Michael Clayton, Bucs, had four receptions for 53 yards against New Orleans, becoming the first Tampa Bay rookie with a 1,000-yard season.

Running Backs

■ Lashawn Tomlinson, Chargers, rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns against Cleveland. He has scored a TD in 11 straight games with the Chargers.

■ John Riggins and George Rogers, Redskins, each had 30 carries, including touchdowns runs of 5 and 32 yards against the Colts.

■ Curtis Martin, Jets, had two first-half touchdowns on one run and set a single-season team record with 12 TD rushing yards. He set the team mark for career TDs rushing with 33 against the Redskins.

■ Rudi Johnson, Bengals, had 138 yards rushing, his fifth 100-yard game, on the club record for a season.

■ Fred Taylor, Jaguars, rushed for 165 yards and a touchdown against the Packers.



Chargers win in snow, bask in division title

BY TOM WITHERS

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Seconds after ducking out of the wind-whipped snow and escaping the brutal cold, the San Diego Chargers felt a warmth missing for nearly 10 years.

The Chargers had that NFL playoff glow again.

San Diego won its first AFC West title since 1994, with LaDanian Tomlinson running for 111 yards and two touchdowns and Antonio Gates catching his record-tying 12th TD pass this season in a 21-0 victory over the Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

One year after sinking to a 4-12 mark, the Chargers (11-3) are back among the league's elite and will make their first post-season appearance since 1995 next month. San Diego also is on top of its division for the first time since 1994.

"I'm overjoyed," Tomlinson said. "Unbelievable."

Like the jagged lightning-streaked decals running across the top of their helmets, the Chargers shocked the league — and maybe themselves — with their improbable turnaround.

"It feels great," said quarterback Drew Brees, who attempted just six passes. "It's been a long road for San Diego fans and us. We weren't expected to do too much this year. Instead of 11-3, a lot of people thought we'd be 3-11."

Tomlinson had two 1-yard scoring runs and Gates slid through the snow on a 72-yarder for the Chargers, whose winning streak is the club's longest since 1987.

The victory, coupled with second-place Denver's 45-17 loss in Kansas City, gave



Chargers running back LaDanian Tomlinson prepares for a hit from Browns defender Lewis Sanders, left. Tomlinson rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns.

San Diego the division crown and its first postseason berth since 1995.

"I've only been here for four years, but in some ways it feels like eight," Tomlinson said. "To go from where we were to this is awesome. I've dreamed of the playoffs for a long time, but it's only been a dream."

Reality set in quickly. As the Chargers

walked off the frozen field, each player was handed an "AFC West 2004 Champions" baseball cap.

With a mistake-free offense built around the run and a hard-nosed defense designed to stop team's men from running, coach Marty Schottenheimer has led the Chargers to their longest win streak since 1987 and

turned them into the league's most unlikely success story.

"We're riding the wave," fullback Lorenzo Neal said.

San Diego, which hasn't lost since Oct. 17, also showed it can be a factor in the postseason — regardless of climate. The Chargers ignored a game-time temperature of 18 and a wind chill that dipped to minus-25 to post their first shutout since 1993 and easily handle the Browns (3-11), who lost their eighth straight.

The shutout was the Chargers' first since Nov. 29, 1993, 31-0 over Indianapolis.

The Browns and their heartiest fans shivered through a home finale that was a microcosm of Cleveland's dismal season. The Browns did little on offense and gave up big plays on defense. Even when they gave a break, they couldn't capitalize.

After recovering a fumbled punt, the Browns had first and goal at the San Diego 5, but rookie quarterback Luke McCown's pass was intercepted in the end zone on the next play.

"To Browns fans around the world, I want to say I'm sorry," said interim coach Terry Robiskie, who took over when Butch Davis resigned. "I'm sorry not just about today, but about the season. The season turned out ugly. I've been here, so I've been a part of that."

Gates, the former basketball star at nearby Kent State, made it 14-0 late in the first half. Left uncovered on first down, Gates caught a pass near the 50 and tipped down the sideline untouched to the end zone.

We worked on that play all week," said Gates, who led Mike Dillon (11), Jerry Smith (1967), Todd Christensen (1983) and Wesley Walls (1999) for the most TDs by a tight end in a season.

Improving Chiefs deal fading Broncos a blow

BY DOUG TUCKER

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Jaded Kansas City fans just hate what's happening. The Chiefs have started winning.

After pushing around the mistake-prone Denver Broncos 45-17 on Sunday, Dick Vermeil's squad has won three in a row to improve to 6-8.

Victories over Oakland and San Diego in the final two games will make the Chiefs .500, but at what price? Some fans are saying it would be better to finish on a low note and draft third or fourth in April and get a great player.

"That's fine if they say that," fullback Tony Richardson said. "But they don't play in this locker room. We play to win games. We're not going out there to lose."

A 1-3 start and a four-game losing skid in November destroyed the Chiefs' chances of contending for a postseason berth. But now with the emergence of running back Larry Johnson — who started the season on the third team — the Chiefs are finally looking something like they were supposed to.

"We're not frustrated because we're winning now and we weren't winning then," guard Brian Waters said. "It doesn't matter when you get them, you just want wins. Any time you win, especially late in the season, it can set the stage for your next season."

The Broncos (8-6) are desperately hoping to extend this season. But they looked nothing like contenders against the Chiefs.

Jake Plummer was sacked six times and threw two interceptions to Dexter McCleon, both of which were converted into touchdowns.

The Broncos were penalized 10 times for 100 yards. Tatum Bell was about 5 yards from scoring after going 58 yards with a screen pass but had the ball knocked out of his hands. It rolled through the end zone for a touchdown, giving the Chiefs the ball.

"This game was not a fun game," Plummer said. "It was a bad day."

Johnson and Eddie Kennison each scored two touchdowns, and Dante Hall returned the opening kickoff 97 yards for another score for the Chiefs.

"It was just one of those games where you fall behind and don't feel right even a little bit," Plummer said.

The Broncos have lost three of their past four.

"They really beat us in all areas," Denver coach Mike Shanahan said. "I thought we came out ready to play. We had a lot to play for."

The Chiefs scored on four of their first five possessions en route to their biggest victory margin over the Broncos since a 31-point romp in 1983.

"It was a Kansas City Chiefs day," Vermeil said. "We had a lot of things go our way."



SPORTS



Carter's not around to see
old team beat new one
Page 28



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning walks off the field following their 20-10 win over the Baltimore Ravens in Indianapolis. Manning finished with 249 yards passing and one touchdown.

No record, just a Colts victory

Manning still one short of Marino's mark

BY MICHAEL MAROT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Peyton Manning tried to focus on winning while the home crowd seemed unwilling to accept anything less than a record-setting night.

Manning threw his 47th touchdown pass of the season to move within one of Dan Marino's long-standing record and finished with 249 yards to lead the Colts to a 20-10 victory over the Baltimore Ravens on Sunday night.

But after kneeling twice in the final minute to run out the clock and passing up a chance at tying Marino's record, the Colts' franchise player drew an unexpected reaction from the crowd — boo.

"I can't get over the crowd booing like that," said Manning, last season's league co-MVP. "I hope those were Baltimore fans, because that's what you're supposed to do."

His record pursuit aside, Manning did have another good game. He completed 20 of 33 passes for 249 yards and threw for one touchdown against Baltimore's stingy defense while extending his NFL

record of consecutive 4,000-yard seasons to six. Manning is now one TD pass short of Marino's record 20-year-old record of 48 in a season.

The Colts (11-3) won their seventh straight and set up a showdown with San Diego next week for the No. 3 seed in the AFC.

But it wasn't nearly enough to satisfy a festive crowd that expected to see history.

Before the game, city officials agreed to build a new retractable roof stadium that would keep the team in Indianapolis for 30 more years.

Then fans waved signs and held banners that counted down to the touchdown mark. They roared after Manning hooked up with Marvin Harrison on a TD pass in the third quarter and every time after that when it appeared Manning had a chance to tie the record.

Instead, the Colts settled for two second-half touchdown drives and a win.

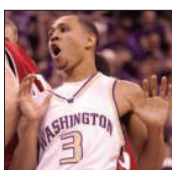
"We're not really focused on that," coach Tony Dungy said of the record. "We'd like to get it, but we're focused on winning."

SEE RECORD ON PAGE 34

Jaguars stun Pack; Green Bay still seals playoffs

Green Bay Packers receiver Robert Ferguson loses his helmet as he is hit by Jacksonville Jaguars safety Donovan Darius (20) in the fourth quarter on Sunday in Green Bay, Wis. Darius was ejected from the game after the hit. Ferguson left the field on a stretcher and was taken to a local hospital. The Jaguars won 28-25, but Green Bay had clinched a playoff berth before the game even started when other teams in the NFC lost earlier in the day. See story on Page 34.

AP photo



Washington gets a tip, upsets N.C. State

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Owens injured in Eagles' victory

Page 32

A lot of bowls, a lot of points before New Year's Page 27

